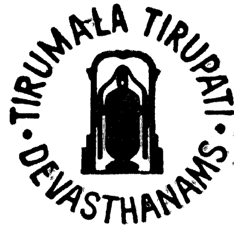
Monotheism of Hindu Religion

(UNITY IN DIVERSITY OF HINDU WORSHIP)

by

K. SRINIVASAN, M.A.,



1976

Published by

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS, TIRUPATI

Preface

From time immemorial, life of different species, both static and mobile, has come and gone. Many an empire reached its pinnacle of glory and crumbled down into the dustbin of history to be exhumed by the posterity.

But ever since this cosmos took shape, the earth has not changed its revolution around the fiery sun. The sun has not stopped its radiance giving succour to saplings to sprout, plants to flower and beings to grow, nor the moon its refreshing, cool, balmy nature.

The primordial force which stands unseen behind the cosmic actions from ages that have gone by and those yet to be born is being called a force in scientific terms and God by theistic societies. Though that supreme truth is one and the same, it is being meditated and worshipped in different forms and names with masculine and feminine attributes coupled with omnipotency.

This is the quintessence of the Hindu view of life and mode of worship which is discussed at length in " Monotheism of Hindu Religion " written by Sri K. Srinivasan, which appeared serially in the T.T.D. Bulletin (now ' Sapthagiri ").

The preface of the author, as well as the foreword of the seasoned temple administrator Sri. C. Anna Rao, the then Executive Officer and the present Chairman, T. T. D. Trust Board also bears eloquent testimony to the purport of the book.

The Devasthanams feels it a great privilege of associating itself with the propagation of religion through literature.

P. S. RAJAGOPALA RAJU,
Executive Officer
T. T. Devasthanams, Tirupati



FOREWORD

TO THE FIRST EDITION (1962)

I am glad to write a foreword to Sri K. Srinivasan's book on Monotheism of Hindu Religion. He has covered a wide field in his articles. The book is a reprint of articles previously published in T. T. D. Bulletin. The art of book writing requires a lot of study and learning. In the book there are some portions which explain in what respects Hinduism is misunderstood. There is a bid to show how rational and practical Bhagavad Gita is in its precepts. Though there is an excess of quotations from scriptures there is an attempt to explain the practical reason behind Hindu worships.

C. ANNA RAO
Executive Officer
T. T Devasthanams, Tirupati

PREFATORY NOTE

TO THE FIRST EDITION (1962)

The writer of a book has the rare privilege of making a comment on himself in the form of a preface. To begin with pure reason as applied to religion will become flippant atheism. In matters of faith and religion, we raise our imagination above reason. It is not possible with the help of human reason to prove the existence or the non-existence of God. The revelations of seers have to guide us in building our faith. This is the guiding principle of the Upanishads. The compilers and authors of the Upanishads were seers who gave expression to their inspired revelations (Sruti) with such self-abnegation that the authors (of Upanishads) have been withheld giving their names. Scriptures without authorship like Upanishads and other works have evoked in me a peculiarly religious feeling. Those who have criticised religion and questioned the authority of statements in the scriptures have also evoked in me a feeling in support of religion.

The main point in this publication is to give an idea of some important Hindu worships and beliefs. At the same time, I have to point out that I have not tried to give a compendium of all religions or to produce a globe of religious principles, beliefs and practices and worships in Hinduism. But, only an attempt has been made to refer to a few kinds of worships and explain the practical reason behind the worships and the monotheistic character of the worships:

The errors I claim as my own.

In writing this book I have had the help of many people. The religious people whom I have met have in their discussions with me given me thought provoking ideas.

Moreover the scriptures without authorship like Upanishads and other works from which quotations have been given have evoked in me a peculiarly religious feeling. Those who have criticised religion and questioned the authority of statements in the scriptures have also evoked in me a feeling in support of religion.

For assisting in translation of Ramanuja's Introduction to Gita, into English. I am grateful to Sri K. R. Doraiswamy Sastri (previous Sanskrit Professor of Presidency College). I am grateful to Agnihothram Ramanuja Thathachariar for the enlightenment he gave me on religious matters and to Sri K. S. Venkatrama Iyer for assisting in proof reading.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not thank the Executive Officer Sri C. Anna Rao and the Devasthanam authorities for the assistance given in bringing out the articles as a book.

It is impossible to make adequate acknowledgement of all the assistance I have received I have tried to indicate through quotation marks and foot notes the services of all borrowed ideas but it is inevitable that I have unconsciously missed some.

K. SRINIVASAN

MONOTHEISM OF HINDU RELIGION

HINDUISM is ancient like Judaism or Zoroastrianism or any other ancient religion. Christians attacked the Hebrew religion of the Jews and conquerred it. Many religions have tried to conquer Hinduism but Hinduism has survived. The Vedas and the Upanishads are teaching direct truths or explaining direct truths while Puranas, Ithihasas etc., teach truths and impart moral lessons by parables, illustrations and stories. As Puranas have been embellished by many ornamental things, it happens some times truths are exaggerated. Vedas and Upanishads go direct to the essentials but it is difficult to understand them as is difficult to drink liquor neat. It is easy to understand the Puranas and Ithihasas just as it is easy to drink diluted liquor. Everything said in the Puranas should not be taken at its face value. It is easier by illustrations from the Puranas to convince a layman than by directly quoting from the Vedas and the Upanishads. In the various Puranas which narrate stories in the various cycles (Yugas) a change in the life led by the people is noticed. In the Krita Yuga, people were meditating and leading a pious life. In the Treta Yuga—three fourth virtue and one fourth falsehood prevailed—during the Ramraj people lived as if they were living in the Krita Yuga. In the case of Dwapara Yuga, there was mixture of truth and falsehood, virtue and vice but at the beginning of the Kali Yuga, the present age, it is said that there was deterioration and there will be deterioration till the stage is set for the Lord Narayana to appear in the form of Kalki to rescue good people and break the might of evil ones, and to establish dharma on earth. The statements made in the Puranas have got their significance, but everything mentioned in the Purana should not be taken as literally true. The outlines and the essentials are true but the accretions etc., may not necessarily be accepted in their entirety.

Upanishads maintain the oneness of God though there is diversity of belief. There are diverse ways of approaching God as said in the Keno Upanishad. Though the various deities (the various elements), the Sun, the Moon, the Indra, the Agni etc., are all powerful, yet it is said in the Taitreya Upanishad that they

are all afraid of the one supreme being. This has to be emphasised. This is the key-note of Hinduism. Hinduism that way is the most monotheistic religion (though it is a tolerant religion allowing people to worship in their own way). The unity and the monotheistic character of Hinduism are maintained throughout. That which is mentioned as enjoyment and paradise of the senses is only a few degrees above human enjoyment. On the other hand he who is not affected by passion and who has got pure conduct is blessed.

A human being as said in the Taitreya Upanishad is one who is healthy, strong and youthful on this earth. Manushya Gandharvas are 100 times happier than human beings. Deva Gandharva's happiness is 100 times more than that of Manushya Gandharvas. The happiness of the pithrus (or manes) is 100 times that of Deva Gandharva. Unclassified Devata's happiness is 100 times that of Pithrus. Classified Devata's bliss is 100 times that of unclassified Devata. Indra's happiness is 100 times that of Karma Devata. Prajapathi's bliss is 100 times that of Indra. Brahma's happiness is 100 times that of Prajapathi. The good man who has no desires and is of pure conduct can attain Brahmananda. Therefore, the paradise of the senses is a fallacy. Heaven could be attained by meditation and pure conduct and not by aspiring for enjoyment. This should not be confused with worship for some particular purpose which is referred to in the Bhagavatham. In the Bhagavatham worship for attaining certain purposes are referred to in the III Chapter of Skanda II but it is said in the last sloka of that particular portion that whether you have got wishes to be gratified or not you have to worship the Supreme being for the attainment of salvation.

But in Vedanta, Atman stands for ' Spirit within man ' and Brahman for ' Spirit behind the universe,' and the whole trend of Vedanta is to establish the unity between these two. The Atman has been spoken of as the only principle of Intelligence within man, and here it is asserted that this Atman alone is Brahman, the Spirit behind the universe, and not the extra-cosmic Deities and their symbols that ignorant people worship. The wise man relinquishes both joy and sorrow having realized, by means of meditation on the inner self, that ancient effulgent one, hard to be seen, subtle, immanent, seated in the heart and residing within the body.

When the Atman is realized, one attains that state whi(ınscends all relative aspects of life, such as pain and pleasuı ɜ and death, good and bad, etc. And so·this state is called tl ɜrnal absolute state. The sense of pain or pleasure is deriv(rough the reactions of the body and the bodily associatior ɜre being no modification possible in Atman which is beyoı contacts. The mortal who has heard this and comprehend(ǝll that subtle principle, the soul of Dharma, after discriminatiı (properly) attains it; he verily rejoices having obtained t joyable.

विज्ञानसारथिर्यस्तु मनः प्रग्रहवान् नरः ।
सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद् विष्णोः परमं पदम् ।।
इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः ।
मन स्तु परा बुद्धिर्बुद्धेरात्मा महान् परः ।।
महतः परमव्यक्तमव्यक्तात् पुरुषः परः ।
पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित् सा काष्ठा सा पर गतिः ।।

Kathopanishc

That man who has knowledge for his charioteer and the mi r (well controlled) the reins—he attains the end of the journ(at supreme place of Vishnu.

The objects of sense are superior to the senses, the mind perior to the objects, the intellect is superior to the mind, t reat Atman is superior again to the intellect. The Unmanifest perior to the Great (Atman) and the Purusha is superior to t nmanifest. Nothing is superior to the Purusha—He is the eı e is the supreme goal. (This is expounded in Kathopanisha ıe cosmic deities—Agni, Vayu and Indra excel the other Go(r they approached the Spirit nearest and they were the first ıow Him as Brahman, as said in Keno Upanishad.

Brahman knew their vanity, and He appeared before them t ey did not understand who that adorable Spirit was.

They said to Agni (fire) " O! Jatavedas (all-knower) find (ho this adorable Spirit is." He agreed.

Agni hastened to the Spirit. The Spirit asked him who as, and Agni replied ' Verily I am Agni, the omniscient.

" What power resides in such as you?" asked the Spirit." Why, I can burn up everything, whatever there is on earth " replied Agni.

The Spirit put down a straw before him and said 'Burn it.' Agni dashed at it. But was unable to burn it. So he returned to the gods, saying "I could not find out who that adorable Spirit is."

Then the gods said to Vayu (wind) 'O Vayu, find out who this adorable Spirit is.' He agreed.

Vayu hastened to the Spirit. The spirit asked him who he was, Vayu replied "Verily, I am Vayu, the King of the Air.

" What power resides in such as you"? asked the Spirit.

" Why, I can blow away everything that is on earth" said Vayu.

The Spirit put down a straw before him and said "blow that away." Vayu dashed at it, but was unable to move. So he returned to the gods saying 'I could not find out who that adorable Spirit is.'

Then the gods said to Indra (the chief of gods): 'O! Baghavan, find out who this adorable Spirit is?.' He agreed and hastened towards the Spirit, but the Spirit disappeared from his view.

And in that very spot he beheld a woman who was fair—the daughter of the snowy mountain Himavan. And of Her he asked, " Who could this adorable Spirit be?.'

" Brahman " she exclaimed. Then alone Indra understood that the Spirit was Brahman.

Therefore, indeed, Indra excels other gods; for he approached the Spirit nearest, and was the first to know Him as Brahman.

It was stated by the ancient sages of India that the whole of our bodily existence (including the mind and the senses) is controlled by the gods like Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni and Vayu, whose powers are manifested in the cosmic activity. Then again desires and all their evil train are sometimes called Asuras and the pure

---

[The Ramakrishna Mutts publication (KENO UPANISHAD's translation) is constructive and outlines the story of Indra approaching the supreme deity better than any other deity. This has assisted the writer of this article for illustrating how all the gods, Devas etc., derived their authority from the Purushothama (the Supreme Spirit.]

:tivities of the senses and mind are conceived as the Devas. The ›nflict between these two opposing tendencies is termed as the 'evasura war, which allegory has been developed with much nagination in the Puranas and has been extended to its cosmic ;pect.

The one supreme spirit gives power to the elements to function ıd ordains the Devathas or gods to exercise their.power. The ne supreme spirit is the highest ideal of Hinduism. But there are ırious ways of worshipping God.

Scriptures teach Karma Gnana and Bhakti.

In the Isavasya Upanishad, karma is taught and also gnana. ı the first two sentences of this Upanishad both Gnana and Karma re taught.

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद् धनम् ।।

Whatever there is changeful in this ephemeral world, all that enveloped by the Lord. By this renunciation support yourself ›o not covet the wealth of anyone.

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतँ समाः ।
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ।।

Only by performing scripture-ordained works, should one esire to live a hundred years. Thus, and in no other way, can ou be free from the taint of evil deeds, as long as you are fond f your human life.

This Upanishad lays down two paths for spiritual aspirants ne for the Gnanins or those who are the exclusive adherents of ıe path of knowledge, and the other for those who have not attained ıe necessary internal development needed to renounce desires nd adopt that exalted way. The rest of the Upanishad has in iew all other persons who are bound to the world by the desire ɔ enjoy it. These men who are attracted by the things of the vorld, worship God as a Person with the aim of securing through

Once the Maharatta emperor Sivaji was asked by his Gur Ramdas, who ruled the Maharatta empire. Sivaji replied that h himself ruled the Maharatta empire. Ramdas took Sivaji to hill and showed him how toads got drinking water though the lived inside the hill and asked Sivaji who made provision for th toads. Sivaji said God provided the Toads with food and water Ramdas is thus said to have taught Sivaji that the latter mus abandon Ahamkara and Mamakara. The Isavasya Upanisha teaches a similar lesson.

In the Taitreya Upanishad, some emphasis is laid on Karma in the performance of one's duty or it may be called "Charter o Duties of the Grihasta" and for all those who are leading the house holder's life.

मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो भव । आचार्यदेवो भव । अतिथिदेवो भव ।।

Honour thy mother; honour thy father, thy preceptor, thy guests etc.

सत्यान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । धर्मान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । कुशलान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । भूत्यै न प्रमदितव्यम् । स्वाध्यायप्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् । देवपितृकार्याभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् ।।

Dont's:—One should not abandon truth, justice, pious deeds, welfare prayers to the gods.

In the Mandukya Upanishad, the highest Gnana is taught.

अदृष्टमव्यवहार्यमग्राह्यमलक्षणमचिन्त्यमव्यपदेश्यमेकात्मप्रत्ययसारम्

The supreme being cannot be seen or argued about, the formless, cannot be comprehended but it is the only (self) Atman pervading the Universe.

In the Tripatviboothinarayana Upanishad, which is the 54th from among the 120 Upanishads, it may be said that Bhakti to Lord Vishnu is taught.

यत उपासकः परमानन्दं प्राप सावरणं ब्रह्माण्डं च चित्वा परितः समवलोक्य ब्रह्माण्डस्वरूपं निरीक्ष्य परमार्थतस्तत्वरूपं ब्रह्मादयः सुराः सर्वे समस्ताः परमर्षयश्चाण्डाभ्यन्तरप्रपञ्चैकदेशमेव वर्णयन्ति ।

The Devotee having become a celestial Being experiencing eternal bliss, looking at this wide creation, wonders at the glories of the person whose greatness Brahma, the Devathas, the Rishis know only a little of which they admire.

Sri Ramanuja's introduction to the Gita is an example of Bhakti.

The Lord of Wealth, the single seat of all auspiciousness, opposite of all undesirable unauspiciousness, form of pure bliss identical with unlimited knowledge, different from all objects other than His own; the extensive ocean of collections of all innumerable auspicious qualities like the transcendental knowledge which is primary and limitless, strength, overlordship, valiance force and lustre.

पाण्डुतनययुद्धप्रोत्साहनव्याजेन परमपुरुषार्थलक्षणमोक्षसाधनतया वेदान्तोदितं स्वविषयं ज्ञानकर्मानुगृहीतं भक्तियोगं अवतारयामास ।

Sri Ramanujacharya's introduction to Gita.

In order to give an idea of Saguna Brahman there are splendid description given in Tripatviboothinarayana Upanishad to enable Upasana and concentration. For instance:

अथोपासकस्तदाज्ञया नित्यं गरुडमारुह्य वैकुण्ठवासिभि: सर्वै: परिवेष्टितो महासुदर्शनं पुरस्कृत्य विष्वक्सेनपरिपालितश्चोपर्युपरि गत्वा ब्रह्मानन्दविभूतिं प्राप्य सर्वत्रावस्थितान्ब्रह्मानन्दमयाननन्तवैकुण्ठानवलोक्य निरतिशयानन्दसागरो भूत्वाऽऽत्मारामानानन्दविभूतिपुरुषाननन्तानवलोक्य तान्सर्वानुपचारै:,

The Bhakta or Devotee ultimately attains the position of Angels and has the privilege of going on the Garuda along with the dwellers in Vaikuntha and surrounded by them and with Sudharsana going before him and Visvaksena, the Senapathi guarding the realm. The Devotee attains immortality and perceives the highest bliss and is shown all respect by other occupants of the Vaikuntha atmosphere.

In the Rahasyatrayasara, Vedanta Desika refers to Bhakti and discriminate knowledge.

हृधा हृत्पद्मसिंहासनरसिकहयग्रीवहेषोर्मिघोषक्षिप्तप्रत्यर्थिदृप्ति:जयति बहुगुणा पङ्क्तिरस्मद्गुरुणाम् । कर्मब्रह्मात्मके शास्त्रे कौतस्कुतनिबर्तकान् बन्दे हस्तिगिरीशस्य [illegible]

The God Hayagriva is the object of Upasana by Vedanta Desika the author of Rahasyatrayasara and with all the espirit de corps for the love of the platoon called Sri Vaishnava society this sloka was written as a dedication to Lord Hayagriva. Visishtadvaita Acharyas are fed up with the discussion of Karma and Gnana. There are those who are attracted by the things of the world, follow the householder's path and those who aspire for prosperity in this life and emancipation thereafter. But the Gnanins are those who follow the Brahma marga, the adherents of the path of knowledge and have attained the necessary internal development needed to renounce desire.

Among the Upanishads, the Sandilya Upanishad is one which contains discourses on karma, gnana, and bhakti all aspects referred to together with Yoga. Yama, Niyama which forms two of the eight angas of Yoga containing a code of ethical conduct, devotion and discriminate knowledge.

तत्राहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यदयार्जपक्षमाधृतिमिताहारशौचानि चेति यमा दश ।
तपःसन्तोषास्तिकयदानेश्वरपूजनसिद्धान्तश्रवणह्रीमतिजपोव्रतानि दश नियमाः ।।

Non-killing, truth, faith, celibacy, charitableness, patient, bravery, moderation in eating, cleanliness, penance, contentment, good faith, almsgiving, pooja as enjoined in the scriptures, determination, listening to scriptures being taught, japas and observance of vows are necessary preliminaries for Yoga.

When Narada asked Brahma to instruct him about the type of wisdom which makes one realise the truth of the Spirit, the essential truth about this universe, as to what its characteristics are, on what it is supported, by whom it has been created, where it ultimately rests, by what power it is ruled and what it essentially is, Brahma said:

नारायणपरा वेदा देवा नारायणङ्गजाः ।
नारायणपरा लोका नारायणपरा मखाः ।।

नारायणपरो योगो नारायणपरं तपः ।
नारायणपरं ज्ञानं नारायणपरा गतिः ।।

तस्यापि द्रष्टुरीशस्य कूटस्थस्याखिलात्मनः ।
सृज्यं सृजामि सृष्टोऽहमीक्षयैवाभिचोदितः ।।

Srimad Bhagavata. Discourse V. Book II.

" Narayana is the goal of the Vedas, the gods have sprung from the limbs of Narayana, the sacrifices are meant to please Narayana and the worlds attained through such sacrifices are so many limbs of Narayana's Cosmic Body. Narayana is the ultimate object of all Yoga (concentration of mind); all austere penance is intended to propitiate Narayana. All wisdom is directed towards Narayana and all paths lead to Narayana. He is at once the Seer and the Ruler; though immutable. He is all-embracing. It is He who created me; and, encouraged by His glance, I evolve this creation."

वाचां वह्नेर्मुखं क्षेत्रं छन्दसां सप्त धातवः ।
हव्यकव्यामृतान्नानां जिह्वा सर्वरसस्य च ॥
सर्वासूनां च वायोश्च तन्नासो परमायने ।
अश्विनोरोषधीनां च घ्राणो मोदप्रमोदयोः ॥

Srimad Bhagavatha—Discourse VI. Book II.

The mouth of the Cosmic Being is the birth place of the organ of speech as well as of the god of fire;the seven Dhatus or essential ingredients of His Body are the source of the seven Vedic metres and even so His tongue is the source of all kinds of food—the food of the gods, the food of the manes and the remains of both of the six varieties of taste, as well as of the sense of taste and the birth-place of Varuna.

अहमेवासमेवाग्रे नान्यद् यत् सदसत् परम् ।
पश्चादहं यदेतच्च योऽवशिष्येत सोऽस्म्यहम् ॥
ऋतेऽर्थं यत् प्रतीयेत न प्रतीयेत चात्मनि ।
तद्विद्यादात्मनो मायां यथाऽऽभासो यथा तमः ॥
यथा महान्ति भूतानि भूतेषूच्चावचेष्वनु ।
प्रविष्टान्यप्रविष्टानि तथा तेषु न तेष्वहम् ॥
एतावदेव जिज्ञास्यं तत्त्वजिज्ञासुनाऽऽत्मनः
अन्वयव्यतिरेकाभ्यां यत् स्यात् सर्वदा ॥

Srimad Bhagavata—Discourse XI. Skanda II.

That which makes it possible for something inexplicable to appear in My being without any corresponding reality, just

like the presence of the planet Rahu in the midst of the other luminaries, should be regarded as My Maya. Even as the gross elements may be said to have entered all living beings, both great and small, after their creation, and they can as well be said not to have entered them, similarly I can be said to have entered the bodies of those living beings as their indwelling Spirit and I can equally be said not to have entered them.

He (Brahman) has transcended (1) matter, the cause of all beings, its products—mahat, ahamkara and the rest, and the effect caused by the gunas, satva, rajas and tamas,and He is never subject to their influence. His knowledge extends to everything undiminished. He is the Atman of all; for whatever is within the changing and changeless worlds is pervaded by Him.His swarupa (substance) is the seat of every auspicious thing. He supports all beings with an atom of his power. He has a figure that he takes up at his will, that is suitable to himself, and with the forms that He assumes in avatara He does what is good to the whole world. He is the one seat in which tapas, bala, aiswarya, gnana virya, sakthi and all other qualities are found. All of them are auspicious qualities and their excellence cannot be measured. He is superior to all superior beings. The jivas in the primitive condition and the evolved condition are his bodies. In his swarupa He cannot be perceived and in his avatara He can be perceived. He controls all. He sees everything in itself and in its attributes. He is seen and attained in meditation. He is one who is free from faults, who is pure, who is ever free from imperfections and who is ever the same. All His things are His saktis.

The word Bhagavan is used to denote the highest Brahman. The syllable 'Bha' has two meanings; that He collects the materials needed for creation and that He is bhartha or lord. The meaning of the syllable Ga is that he supports, that he destroys and he creates. The term Bhaga connotes the possession in full measure of the six qualities Aiswarya, Virya, Yasas (reputed as the seat of good qualities) Sri (objects of enjoyment), Gnana, Desirelessness.

The meaning of the syllable Va is that all beings abide in Him who has all beings as his bodies, and who is the atma of all and that He abides in all beings. The word Bhagavan connotes one that has in full measure the six qualities: Gnana, Sakti, Bala,

Aiswarya, Virya and Tapas without undesirable qualities. Thus the noble word Bhagavan denotes Vasudeva the highest Brahman; it does not denote anyone else. The word both by its etymology and by well established usage denotes Him.

" Religion and ethics."

In the Bhagavata we are taught that Karma must find its consummation in Bhakti and that Karma without Bhakti is a mere burden in life.

A description of the aspects of Bhakti is found in the famous verse uttered by Prahlada:

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥

Hearing about Vishnu, singing His Glory, remembering Him, serving His feet, worshipping Him, bowing before Him, serving Him, being His Comrade, and surrendering oneself to Him.

Real Gnana and Vairagya will always go hand in hand with Bhakti. We are taught also that mere worship, without love and compassion to all beings, is of no value.

यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः संप्लुतोदके
तावान्सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥

When a man wants to drink water from a pond, he does not think of the large quantity of water in the pond or the uses to which he can put the water; but he is concerned only about the water he has to drink to quench his thirst. In the same way, a brahmin who studies the Vedas is concerned only with the portions, by studying and preaching which, he can attain salvation and not with portions pertaining to all miscellaneous matters.

नत्वेवाहं जातुनासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः ।
न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वेवयमतः परम् ॥

At no time did I cease to exist
Nor you nor these princes of men

This is an important sloka which contains the essence of Visishtadvaita philosophy. Jeeva, Prakriti and Purusha are different so long as there is no deluge (pralaya) or creation (srishti). As Sri Ramanuja interprets man, who has jeeva, is trying to transcend Prakriti (nature) and attain Purusha (God). During the Pralaya and Srishti, all the three jeevas (embodied soul) Prakriti (nature) and Purusha (supreme spirit) are merged. This is near to the philosophy of qualified Monism.

As referred to by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man. It is a remoter and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious But it differs from the body in one important respect. It is not, like that, now subjected to the human will. Its serene order is inviolable by us. It is, therefore, to us, the present expositor of the divine mind.

Religion and ethics, which may be called the practice of ideas, or the introduction of ideas into life, have an analogous effect with all culture. Ethics and religion differ herein; that the one is the system of human duties commencing from man; the other, from God. Religion includes the personality of God; Ethics does not.

Action taught in the Gita:

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चंचलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥

"As often as the wavering and unsteady mind runneth away, so often retaining it in, let him bring it under the control of the SELF."

पार्थ नैवेह नामुत्र विनाशस्तस्य विद्यते ।
नहि कल्याणकृत्कश्चिद्दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ॥

The Blessed Lord said:

"O son of Pritha, neither in this world nor in the life to come is there destruction for him; never doth any who worketh righteousness, O beloved, tread the path of woe."

सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् ।
सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः ॥

" Congenital duty, O son o᾽ Kunti, though defective; ought not to be abandoned. All undertakings indeed are clouded by defects as fire by smoke."

यत्तदग्र विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् ।
तत्सुखं सात्त्विकं प्रोक्तमात्म बुद्धिप्रसादजम् ।।

Which at first is as venom but in the end is as nectar; that pleasure is said to be pure, born of the blissful knowledge of the SELF.

Gnana or wisdom:

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।
तथा देहांतरप्राप्ति र्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ।।

As the dweller in the body experienceth, in the body, childhood, youth and old age, so passeth he on to another body, the steadfast one grieveth not threat.

ज्ञानेन तु तदज्ञानं येषां नाशितमात्मनः ।
तेषामादित्यवज्ज्ञानं प्रकाशयति तत्परम् ।।

Verily, in whom unwisdom is destroyed by the wisdom of the SELF, in them wisdom, shining as the sun, reveals the Supreme.

ये हि संजानाजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते ।
आद्यन्तवंतः कौंतेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ।।

The delights that are contact-born, they are verily wombs of pain, for they have beginning and ending, not in them may rejoice the wise.

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ।।

In whatever manner men approach Me, I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine, O Partha!

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ।।

To those men who worship Me alone, thinking of no oth to those, ever harmonious, I bring full security.

येऽप्यन्यदेवताभक्ता यजन्ते श्रद्धयाऽन्विताः ।
तेऽपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम् ।।

Even the devotees of other Shining Ones who worship f of faith, they also worship Me, O son of Kunti, though contra to the ancient rule.

Bhakti or devotion in the Gita.

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भवत्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ।।

He who offereth to Me with devotion a leaf,a flower, a fru water, that I accept from the striving self, offered as it is w devotion.

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ।।

The difficulty of those whose minds are set on the unma fested is greater; for the path of the Unmanifested is hard the embodied to reach.

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ।।

Abandoning all duties come unto Me alone for shelter;sorr not, I will liberate thee from all sins.

The Brahma Sutra contains crisp aphorisms which deal mos with Gnana (Wisdom).

अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा............

Now (after the attainment of the requisite spiritual qualiti therefore(as the results obtained by sacrifices etc., are ephemer whereas the result of the knowledge of Brahman is eternal) t inquiry (into the cool nature) of Brahman (which is beset w doubts owing to the conflicting views of various schools of phi

जन्माद्यस्य यतः ।.........

Brahman is that omniscient, omnipotent from which proceed the origin etc., (*i.e.*, substance and dissolution) of this world.

तत्तु समन्वयात् ।

But the Brahman is to be known only from the scriptures and not independently by any other means established because it is the main purport of Vedanta texts.

गतिसामान्यात् ।

Because all Vedanta texts uniformly refer to an intelligent principle as the first cause,Brahman is to be taken as that cause.

श्रुतत्वाच्च ।

The all-knowing Brahman alone is the first cause of this world because it is so known directly from the Vedas also.

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो मध्य आत्मनि तिष्ठति ।
ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सते ।
एतद् वै तत् ॥

The Purusha of the size of a thumb dwells within the body. He is the lord of the past and the future, and thenceforward one fears no more. This is verily that.

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो ज्योतिरिवाधूमकः ।
ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य स एवाद्य स उ श्वः ।
एतद् वै तत्

The Purusha of the size of a thumb,the lord of the past and the future, is like a light without smoke; he is verily the same today and tomorrow. This is verily that.

शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्य-
स्तासां मूर्धानमभिनिस्सृतैका ।
तयोर्ध्वमायन्नमृतत्वमेति

(This is a part of Gnana. Bhakti itself leads to Gnana, Vairagya and Moksha).

Hundred and one are the nerves of the heart; of them one has extended towards the crown of the head. Going upwards by it, man attains immortality; but others lead on departing differently.

Eternal Greatness in temporal facts.

A. N. WHITEHEAD a well-known writer said that religion will conquer which can render clear to popular understanding some eternal greatness incarnate in the passage of temporal fact.

In Hinduism, there are various kinds of worship while the oneness of God is being maintained. There is worship for people of various orders of evolution. It also takes into consideration the material point of view side by side with the spiritual point of view. He is true to God who is true to man. It is said in the Gita, one must do actions which are conducive to the good of the world.

लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन् कर्तुमर्हसि

Having an eye on the welfare of the world thou should perform action.

In the Taitreya Upanishad, it is laid down that one should produce abundant food. This is a pious vow. Earth is food, and Ether is the eater. Ether is established on the earth. Earth is established on Ether. Therefore, he who knows and contemplates on food becomes well established and enjoys food and commands enough food.

In cattle and in the effulgence born of sacred wisdom, he becomes great. Through righteous conduct, he becomes a well renowned man.

अन्नं बहु कुर्वीत । तद् व्रतम् ।
पृथिवी वा अन्नम् । आकाशोऽन्नादः ।
पृथिव्यामाकाशः प्रतिष्ठितः ।
आकाशे पृथिवी प्रतिष्ठिता ।
तदेतदन्नमन्ने प्रतिष्टितम् ।

स य एतदन्नमन्ने प्रतिष्ठितं वेद प्रतितिष्ठति ।
अन्नवानन्नादो भवति ।
महान्भवति प्रजया पूशुभिर्ब्रह्मवर्चसेन ।
महान्कीर्त्या ।

The Community Projects are putting into practice what is preached in the Taitreya Upanishad. The Community Projects are important activities of the Government of India and there is a Union Ministry specially for the Community Projects. This shows the importance of community projects. Reading between the lines, one can see the spiritual significance of the Community Projects.

In the Taitreya Upanishad, in the Avahanti Mantra there is a quotation for more disciples to join; for more food,more prosperity for the people. There is an invocation.

श्रुतं मे गोपाय ।
आवहन्ती वितन्वाना ।
कुर्वाणाऽचीरमात्मनः ।
वासाꣳसि मम गावश्च ।
अन्नपाने च सर्वदा
ततो मे श्रियमावह ।
लोमशां पशुभिः सह स्वाहा ।
आ मा यन्तु ब्रह्मचारिणः स्याहा ।

This is an invocation for produce from land, cows, wealth prosperity. Also it is a wish for more student members for Community development.

* During the past five years, the disciples of many of the disciplines, subdisciplines and special fields have been made uneasy by a social invention,Community Development which is demanding re-adjustment in thinking and action. Learning to share credit and learning to share responsibility are difficult human adjustments which may be even more difficult when groups of specialists are required to share responsibility and credit with one another. Community Development aims at helping people to help themselves. Community Development aims at increased and better participation of the people in community affair, revitalisation of existing forms of lôcal Government and transaction towards effective local administration where it is not yet functioning.

* The author expresses his views which prevailed before 1962.

There was an occasion when one of my co-religionists (of the same branch of Visistadwaita Philosophy) was mentioning to me the following points. See, the Bible contains great lessons of forbearance and forgiveness. Does your religion contain similar provisions. I hastened to reply: In the Hindu system of philosophy, Veda and Vedanta are the highest. Next comes the Ithihasas and Puranas. Then, the Acharya granthas, Prabandha and Stothras. There are more than 108 Upanishads. Among them Sandilya Upanishad is a minor upanishad; it is the 62nd Upanishad. Sandilya Upanishad gives details of the virtues (10 Yamas and 10 Niyamas) which have to be practised and represent two stages of Yoga, which has 8 stages. This minor portion of this minor Upanishad contains 20 virtues which include forbearance, forgiveness, truth, endurance, simplicity, moderation, fasting, celebacy etc., which are prime necessities for starting Yoga. The gentleman was convinced. As Hinduism caters to all tastes, and is comprehensive unless one is a high grade expert, he will not be in a position to answer all questions.

Besides Hindu religion visualises each person worshipping according to his own lights. Certain aspects of Hinduism specialise in emphasising forbearance and divine love to the exclusion of all other aspects which nearly tantamounts to Christian religion. In a similar manner, certain other aspects of Advaita worship of God may be akin to the Muslim religion.

In the Christian religion, the predominant note is 'Love is more precious than gold.' While opening the Polish House, it is reported Lord Halifax spoke as follows:

"Nor can that endure which has not its foundation upon Love. For love alone diminishes not, but shines with its own light, makes an end of discord, softens the fires of hate, restores peace to the world, brings together the sundered, redresses wrongs, aids all and injures none. And whoso invokes its aid shall find peace and safety and have no future of ill."

In the Muslim religion, the predominating note is a zealously guarded faith. Five prayers a day, almsgiving, fasting, frequent lustrations, universal brotherhood and oneness of god are the cardinal principles of a Muslim. Parsee stand for religious toleration.

The Jains and the Buddhists stand for Ahimsa (non-killing). A Hindu has got the option to worship his own favourite Deity. In Christian religion, there are some verses requesting God to give one's daily bread. In Hinduism also, there are some passages asking for gratification of desires, but the highest worship is the worship of the supreme being and asking for no earthly enjoyment but only wishing for salvation.

Gita has got the most cosmopolitan outlook among religious and philosophic books. It says any one irrespective of caste, community and sex, if he or she worships God with devotion he or she can attain salvation. It does not reserve salvation only to Hindus or only to a particular priestly class. In India, religion has survived the onslaught of invaders and rulers because it has struck its roots deep into the hearts of people.

Christian scriptures say that the hairs of your head are numbered. The Muslims also believe that there is a moving finger that writes, as referred to by Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam and that destiny cannot be changed or averted; but in the case of Hinduism especially the Gita considers that there are 5 factors which contribute to success. The body, the actor, the energies, various organs and the most important fifth factor is the providential favour. It is noticed, (reading between the lines) that one can see that a lot of human effort joined to providential favour contributes to success. The blind destiny does not hold sway. This seems to be a most reasonable attitude.

The Taitreya Upanishad describes the gross elements which are threaded on the subtle elements. In order to describe the supreme being, the sound ' OM ' is used which is a combination of 'AU & M.' OM is held as the sound symbol of Brahman; said to be the first sound produced at the beginning of creation. From the Mantras of OM, it is held, came out the feet of Gayatri and from the three feet came out the 3 Vedas and the 3 worlds. From तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं expanded into Rigveda from भर्गोदिवस्य धीमहि· which expanded into the Yajurveda and from धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् which expanded into Samveda. The first is hymnal, the second is devoted to work and the third is devoted to knowledge. The desires which the mantras are stated to gratify in the Taitreya Upanishad are for perpetuating the gross elements and ultimately in order to

attain the subtle elements. Certain restrictions in diet are necessary in order to maintain the body functioning properly. The five actions of breath; prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana can be made to function properly only by regulation of diet and by regulation of conduct. Gita refers to three types of natures, good, energetic and dull. The food that a man eats possesses these qualities. Even among vegetables these qualities are present in varying degrees.

Also from the gross elements, the Upanishad teaches, the subtle elements are evolved. The sun is the greatest centre of energy and, as the main spring of light and energy, is often identified with the Prana in the cosmic energy. Matter is the Moon, Moon being devoid of all heat and light. Whatever exists in the Universe—with form or without form, gross or subtle, atomic or compound—are mutually convertible and the difference between the two is only in the state of manifestation.

Healthy material life is also advocated in the Upanishads especially in the Taitreya Upanishad, side by side with spiritual life. It is said that a young man who has got good health and who is doing all his religious duties may be said to be a happy man. All these material desires are due to self as explained by Yagnavalkya to Maitreyi in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. A woman does not love her husband for the sake of the husband, but for the sake of the self she loves the husband. The woman does not love the children for the sake of the children but for the sake of the self she likes the children. The possessions or properties are not liked by a person for the sake of the possessions but for the sake of the self which is Atman. Therefore, one should discuss about Atman and meditate on the self. There is always the connection between the material and the spiritual world. The Union between material and spiritual things has been asserted in the Upanishads and Scriptures.

In this connection, the views expressed by the President, Vice President and the Prime Minister of India in the World Religious Conference held at Delhi on 17th November '57 are very important Delegates from several countries who attended the World Conference of Religions praised India's efforts to spread the message of love, peace and brotherhood. President Rajendra Prasad

said that man could neither benefit fully from the advance of science nor escape his sure doom unless he gave religious or spiritual values their due place in life.

The moment we touch the level of true religion, mutual suspicions and bickerings disappear and man is face to face with a breadth of vision before which all human beings appear as equals. 'Spiritual view of life' is another name for this feeling. It should be quite clear that genuine peace and happiness of man are inextricably linked with this view of life. This does not, however, mean that bodily comforts and material prosperity should be necessarily eschewed. "What is meant by saying it is that this prosperity should not be mistaken for life's *summum bonum*. Material well-being may be looked upon as one of the means for achieving the highest good."

Sri Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out that mere thinking of old rishis and munis and saying " we are their descendants " would not help. Descendants of even rishis and munis had been both good and bad. The question is not what the rishis and munis were, but what you are yourself. We have to develop to-day's India and not merely think of India of a thousand years ago. If we sacrifice and act according to our own principles, we will not only help others but help ourselves also."

" If this Conference makes you respectful towards other religions and other human beings and makes you feel that there are no chosen races, no chosen nations, no chosen individuals but each one has in him the possibility of growing into the divine, it would have done a great work," Dr. Radhakrishnan declared.

To sum up, Man approaches near-perfection by recognition of the material mould and mental conditions of human existence side by side with the spiritual side of human-life combining in himself the idealist and the pragmatist. Man's nature consists of five aspects: Physical, Vital, Mental, Supramental and Spiritual. In the West there has been a lop-sided development of physical, vital and mental energies. In the East, there is a lop-sided development of supramental and spiritual energies. If Man is not content within himself and develops ill feelings in his dealings with others the result is that a tendency towards discord develops. If every

individual develops the five energies referred to,there will be less chances for dissension.

The conception of peace and security should be understood to mean internal development in man and the attitude of each nation to the other. When there is a balanced development in the individual and also among nations, there is every chance for lasting peace and security in the world.

Eternal greatness in temporal facts.

The whole theme of the Gita is Arjuna's initial unwillingness to fight in the battle of Kurukshetra and how by the persuasive power of the Lord, Arjuna expressed his willingness to fight.

एवमुक्त्वाऽर्जुनः संख्ये रथोपस्थ उपाविशत् ।
विसृज्य सशरं चापं शोकसंविग्नमानसः ।।

Though the battle is a temporal fact, the Gita is a spiritual song of eternity taught on the eve of the battle.

In this universe there is one thing of which Man can feel certain. Man himself is certainly not the greatest spiritual presence in the Universe. He understands the Universe only partially, he can control it only slightly, and manifestly he did not bring it into existence. His own presence in the Universe is, for him, an accomplished fact which has not come about through any choice or particular action.

In the second Chapter of the Gita, Lord Krishna describes how the dweller in the body experiences childhood,youth and old age and how the steadfast one passes without grief from one body to another body." Human life! its duration is momentary, its substance is perpetual flux, its senses dim, its physical organism perishable, its consciousness a vertex, its destiny dark,its repute uncertain—in fact,the material element is a rolling stream, the spiritual element dreams and vapour, life a war and a sojourning in a far country, fame oblivion." One should take what comes contentedly as all are parts of the process to which we owe our own being; and,above all,it means facing Death calmly—taking it simply as a dissolution of the atoms of which every living organism is composed. Their

perpetual transformation does not hurt the atoms,so why should one mind the whole organism being transformed and dissolved? It is a law of Nature, and Natural Law can never be wrong.

" Man's true end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever; and, if preachers and priests were to make this the true purpose of their religion the paramount consideration in the determination of their policy, they would be constantly tuning their essential message to different wave lengths in order to make it audible to different audiences.

The phenomena of which we are aware do not explain themselves. These phenomena must be only a fragment of a Universe of which the rest remains obscure to us;and the key to the explanation of the whole lies hidden in the part which we do not perceive or understand. So the universe in which we find ourselves is a mysterious one.

The true purpose of religion is to radiate the spiritual-counsels and truths and make them accessible to as many souls as possible in order that each of these souls may be enabled thereby to fulfil the true end of Man.

Arnold Toynbee in his book on ' An Historian's Approach to Religion ' (Published by Oxford University Press)also discusses how in the twentieth century there are at least seven higher religions to be taken into account.

There is a presence in the Universe that is spiritually greater than Man himself. This presence is not contained either in some of the Phenomena or in the sum total of them. Man's goal is to seek communion with the presence behind the phenomena, and to seek it with the aim of bringing his self into harmony with this absolute spiritual reality.

The tribute to philosophy of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the purest sage and best of men referred to by Arnold Toynbee contains this idea expressed in different words and in a different manner in the portrayal of self-sacrifice for the salvation of fellow-sufferers in the figure of Christ or of a Bodhisattva;the portrayal of superhuman spiritual stature in the figure of a hero whose mother is human but whose father is divine (the birth-story) that is told

of Jesus. Can these myths be discarded without taking the heart out of the faiths whose essence the myths convey? If the Universe is a mystery and if the key to this mystery is hidden,are not myths an indispensable means for expressing as much as we can express of the ineffable?

Though shrines, rituals, worship and social austerities are sacred they do not come so close to the heart of a religion as its myths; the portrayal of death as the seed of life in the figure of Tammuz-Adonis-Osiris-Attis,embodying the fruitfulness of the year

---

Tammuz—Adonis—Osiris—Attis.

Adonis

In classical mythology a beautiful youth who was beloved by Venus and was killed by a boar while hunting. Hence, usually ironically, any beautiful young man.

Adonis

The feast of Adonis celebrated in Assyria, Alexandria,Egypt,Judaea, Persia Cyprus and Greece,for eight days.Lucian gives a long description of these feasts which were generally held at Mid-summer and at which women first lamented the death and afterwards rejoiced at the resurrection of Adonis - a custom referred to in the Bible (Ezek. VIII, 14) where Adonis appears under the Phoenician name, Tammuz

Attis or Atys

The phrygian counterpart of the Greek Adonis and Phoenician Tammuz. He was beloved by Cybele, the mother of Gods, who changed him into a pine-tree as he was about to commit suicide. A three days festival, was held in his honour every spring, great grief and mourning was expressed, he was sought for on the mountains and on the third day brought back to the shrine of Cybele amid great rejoicing.

Osiris

One of the chief Gods of Egyptian mythology. Judge of the dead, ruler of the kingdom of Ghosts, the creator. the God of the Nile, and the constant foe of his brother (or son) Set, the principle of evil. He was the husband of Iiis and represents the setting sun. He was slain but came to life again and was revenged by Horus and Thoth.

The name means many-eyed. Osiris was usually depicted as a mummy wearing the crown of Upper Egypt, but sometimas as an ox.

Tammnz or Thammuz

A sumerian,Babylonian & Assyrian God who died every year and rose again in the spring.He is identified with the Babylonian Marduk and the Greek Adonis

that dies to be born again,Myths are thought fossils which teach us by symbols and allegories the story of cultures and civilizations in history. With the advance of reason and science Myths lose much of their dogmatic character but or not discarded entirely as futile. Mythology has considerably influenced Indian life. Apart from its relation to art mythology has a scientific aspect. Study of comparative mythology has enabled ethnologists to date many obscure points of racial migration and union. Mr. B.K. Mallik's book " The Real and the Negative " published by George Allen and Unwin discusses about Revelation of logic to Man,Absorption of Man in God and also the Nature and character of the Absolute.

At the same time it is an open question still whether God, the subject matter of all religious experience, is but the purest blue of the firmament, or the stern,ever-wakeful judge of all things that grow or happen in the wide universe, or, after all,nothing more expressive than the inmost faith and trust of the human heart. But never, perhaps, did any two instances of religious zeal clash, one with the other as the two historic views or institutions known as ' revelation of God to man ' and ' the absorption of man in God.' Between them, without a shadow of doubt, they formed the central and competing themes of all religious consciousness. They have not only been worked in devious ways into the main texture of human life, but formed the chief ground on which races and cultures have steadily and furiously split.

We can discuss the subject matter of religious experience in terms of either the object of religious worship or of mystical experience. In life, we come across both groups and individuals in all times and places professed and practised either the one or the other form of religious faith.

It seems inconceivable that there could possibly be any enquiry as to the nature and character of the Absolute God. Perhaps the strangest conclusion of metaphysics is that God in Himself, or the Absolute Reality is not and cannot be the subject matter of any logical enquiry. It is only possible to make enquiry with regard to its existence or non-existence; and the most that can happen as a result of that enquiry is that we can only be in doubt or belief about it. For the rest, the issue clearly is not one of enquiry at all, but strictly of realization.

As for types of faith and worship Lord Krishna's instructions to Arjuna are worth referring to:—

यजंते सात्विका देवान्यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।
प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चन्ये यजंते तामसा जनाः ।।

Pure men worship the gods; the passionate, the gnomes and giants; the others, the dark folk, worship ghosts and troops of nature spirits.

यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।
यज्ञो दान तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ।।

Acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity should not be relinquished, but should be performed; sacrifice, gift and also austerity are the purifiers of the intelligent.

न द्वेष्टचकुशलं कर्म कुशले नानुषज्जते ।
त्यागी सत्वसमाविष्टो मेधावी छिन्नसंशयः ।।

The relinquisher, pervaded by purity, intelligent and with doubts cut away, hateth not unpleasurable action nor is attached to pleasurable.

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यंत्रारूढानि मायया ।।

The Lord dwelleth in the hearts of all beings, by his illusive power causing all beings to revolve, as though mounted on a potter's wheel.

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ।।

"To rescue righteous souls oppressed,
To break the might of evil ones
To set aright the world streams flow,
From age to age I enter birth" —*Gita.*

Again Toynbee has given expression to a similar view in a different way. He says that the interpretation of the rhythm of the Universe as a cyclic movement governed by an impersonal Law

admits of an endless series of successive avatars of God bringing revelation and salvation to His creatures in successive cycles; but the possibility of recurrence is incompatible with the dogma that there has been, or will be, an incarnation of God that has been, or will be, unique and final.

Oneness of God in the diversity of prayers.

In the Bhagavata, Eighth discourse of the Sixth Skandha, there is reference to sipping of a little water with Lord's name—Kesava, Narayana and Madhava—for purifying oneself and praying to Lord Narayana. Lord, who protected the earth in the form of a fish, may protect us in water from the various species of aquatic creatures. May He, Who appeared of His own will, in the form of a religious student, in the case of Vamana, dwarfish in stature, guard us on land. May the Lord in His cosmic form of Trivikrama (He who measured the entire universe in less than three paces) guard us in the air. May Lord Naraśimha, who appeared in a queer form, half man and half lion, and killed Hiranyakasipu (the leader of the demon hosts) protect us in places full of danger, such as forests and the forefront of battles; May the divine Boar, in whose sacred person the various sacrifices are represented *i.e.*, who is a Yagna Purusha, protect us on the road. Let Lord Parasurama, guard us upon the mountain-peaks. May Lord Sri Rama protect us when we are away from home. Let Lord Narayana keep us aloof from violent religious practices, (such as the employment of spells and all sins of omission). Let Lord Dattatreya, the master of Yoga, guard us from abandoning the practice of Yoga. Let Lord Kapila, the Lord of Prakriti save us from the bondage of actions. May the divine sage Sanatkumara guard us from the shafts of love. (Lord Hayagriva (having the head of a horse) may protect us from the sin of neglecting to salute the images of gods met with on the way.) Let Sri Hari manifested as the divine. Tortoise keep us away from every description of hell and so on. For every type of protection, one form of Lord is resorted to.

जलेषु मां रक्षय मत्स्यमूर्तिर्यादोगणेभ्यो वरुणस्य पाशात् ।
स्थलेषु मायावटुवामनोऽव्यात् त्रिविक्रमः खेऽवय विश्वरूप: ।।
दुर्गेष्वटव्याजिमुखादिषु प्रभु: पायान्नृसिंहोऽसुरयूथपारि: ।
विमुञ्चतो यस्य महाट्टहासं दिशो विनेदुर्न्यपतंश्च गर्भाः ॥

रक्षत्वसौ चाध्वनि यज्ञकल्पः स्वदंष्ट्रयोन्नीतधरो वराहः ।
रामोऽद्रिकूटेष्वथ विप्रवासे सलक्ष्मणोऽव्याद् भरताग्रजोऽस्मान् ।।
मामुग्रधर्मादखिलात् प्रमादान्नारायणः पातु नरश्च हासात् ।
दत्तस्त्वयोगादथ योगनाथः पायाद्गणेशः कपिलः कर्मबन्धात् ।।
सनत्कुमारोऽवतु कामदेवाद्धयशीर्षा मां पथि देवहेलनात् ।
देवर्षिवर्यः पुरुषार्चनान्तरात् कूर्मो हरिर्मां निरयादशेषात् ।।

May Sri Krishna, who holds a flute, protect me through the Sangava hours; Lord Narayana in the forenoon and Lord Vishnu, carrying Sudarsana in His hand protect me at midday. May Lord Madhusudana who weilds a terrible bow, protect me in the afternoon and Madhava manifested in three glorious forms, of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, at dusk. May Lord Hrshikesa guard me in the first part as well as at midnight and may Lord bearing the mark of Srivatsa on His chest protect me in the latter part of the night. May Lord Janardana protect me at the close of the night; Damodara at dawn and Lord Visweswara manifested as the Time-Spirit during both twilights, protect me.

नारायणः प्राह्ण उदारशक्तिर्माध्यन्दिने विष्णुररीन्द्रपाणिः ।
दोषेऽपराह्णे मधुहोग्रधन्वा सायं त्रिजामावतु माधवे माम् ।।
दोषे हृषीकेश उतार्धरात्रे निशीथ एकोऽवतु पद्मनाभः ।
श्रीवत्सधामापररात्र ईशः प्रत्यूष ईशोऽसिधरो जनार्दनः ।।
दामोदरोऽव्यादनुसंध्यं प्रभाते विश्वेश्वरो भगवान् कालमूर्तिः ।।

In this context may be referred to what Yudhishtira said—"Who may be said to be the one god in the world? Who may be said to be the one object which is our sole refuge? Who is He by worshipping whom or hymning whose praises human beings would get what is beneficial? What religion is that which, according to thy judgement, is the foremost of all religions?"

By always worshipping with reverence and devotion that immutable Being, one can succeed in transcending all sorrows. The foremost religion of all religions is that one should always worship and hymn the praises of the lotus-eyed Vasudeva with devotion. He is the highest Energy. He is the highest Penance. He is the highest Brahma. He is the highest refuge. He is the most holy of all holies, the most auspicious of all auspicious objects. He

is the God of all the Gods, and He is the immutable Father of all creatures.

Sages do not attempt to speculate on the origin of the creation of the universe. Their speculations, however, are concerned with that creation which springs forth with the awakening of Brahman. Creation and Destruction have occured ceaselessly and will occur ceaselessly. The original creation is impossible to conceive, as Eternity has no beginning.

It is not possible with the help of human reason to prove the existence or non-existence of God. The ultimate cause of things can never be known. Words cannot describe God. The mind also recoils when it starts to meditate on the nature of God. That is what the Taitreya Upanishads say. All reason and natural investigation should follow faith and not precede it. Science can only interpret matter but cannot find the ultimate cause. All matters gravitate. This is a generalisation. Our law of gravitation was found by Newton. Nobody can answer why they gravitate nor can anybody answer the question; what if matter do as not gravitate. Can anybody prevent the law of gravitation from working. There is a gnostic power which works behind all phenomena and nature which is within matter and beyond manifested creation. That, however, is the cause of all occurences in this and presumably other planets.

It is more easy to understand a manifested personal deity than an impersonal and abstract power. Therefore, Kesava, Narayana, Madhava, Govinda, Madhusudhana, Trivikrama, Padmanabha Damodara etc., were introduced and during the daily Hindu prayers in Sandhya, etc., these names have to be muttered while doing *achamana* (sipping water before prayer). In the same way, the Bhagavatha has introduced a deity for each two hours of the day such as, Narayana and Lord Vishnu in the forenoon, Sudarsana in the midday, Madhusudana in the afternoon etc., as already referred to. Just as the various manifestations of God in Matsya, Kurma etc., avatars were various kinds of protection for humanity, the deities who protect us during the day and during the various times of the day are specified in order to make concentration on God easier. There are a thousand and one names for Lord Vishnu as represented in the Sahasranamam. Though

the names are many He is only one, and each name of His has got some attributes. All things have sprung from the union of Prakruti and Purusha. Vasudeva transcends Prakruti and Purusha. He is the source of all existent and non-existent things and that in which all existence and all non-existence become merged at the cosmic dissolution; He is called an Aprameya which means immeasurable. He is not an object of direct perception by the senses. That is why the Taitreya Upanishads point out that fearing Him Indra, Surya, Vayu, Agni and Yama do their duty which means this supreme deity which cannot be comprehended is the supreme Purusha whose manifestations are many, but changeless and eternal.

"Let my songs gather together their diverse strains and flow into a sea of salutation to Thee"—Tagore.

Highest form of worship of the supreme being.

The core of Hinduism consists in the worship of the one Supreme Being. As said in the Narayana Sukta;

सहस्रशीर्षं देवं विश्वाक्षं विश्वशंभुवम् ।
विश्वं नारायणं देवमक्षरं परमं पदम् ।।
पतिं विश्वस्याऽऽत्मेश्वरꣳ शाश्वतꣳ शिवमच्युतम् ।
नारायणं महाज्ञेयं विश्वात्मानं परायणम् ।।

We meditate on Narayana the god with a thousand heads, the all-seeing, the source of all happiness, the all pervading immortal, the supreme abode. We pray to Narayana who is the supreme deity greater than the universe and who can remove our defects. He pervades the whole universe. Purushasukta contains a detailed description of the Lord based on the conception of the supreme being as Narayana the all pervading spirit.

The Bhagavatha expounds the conception of the Lord, with several descriptions in detail:

जन्माद्यस्य यतोऽन्वयादितरतश्चार्थेष्वभिज्ञः स्वराट्
तेने ब्रह्म हृदा य आदिकवये मुह्यन्ति यत्सूरयः ।
तेजो वारिमृदां यथा विनिमयो यत्र त्रिसर्गोऽमृषा
धाम्ना स्वेन सदा निरस्तकुहकं सत्यं परं धीमहि ।।

धर्मः प्रोज्झितकैतवोऽत्र परमो निर्मत्सराणां सतां
वेद्यं वास्तवमत्र वस्तु शिवदं तापत्रयोन्मूलनम् ।
श्रीमद्भागवते महामुनिकृते किं वा परैरीश्वरः
सद्यो हृद्यवरुध्यतेऽत्र कृतिभिः शुश्रूषुभिस्तत्क्षणात् ।
निगमकल्पतरोर्गलितं फलं शुकमुखादमृतद्रवसंयुतम् ।
पिबत भागवतं रसमालयं मुहुरहो रसिका भुवि भावुकाः ।।

We meditate on that transcendent Reality from whom the Universe springs up, in whom it abides, into whom it returns because he is invariably present in all existing things and is distinct from all nonexistence, who is self conscious and who is self effulgent who revealed to Brahma by his mere will the Vedas that cause bewilderment even to the greatest sages in whom the three fold creation appears as real and who excludes Maya by his self-effulgent glory.

In Bagavatha Skanda 5, Chapters 22 and 23 there is a picturesque description of the omnipotent and omnipresent Lord Narayana:

स एष भगवानादिपुरुष एव साक्षान्नारायणो लोकानां स्वस्तय आत्मानं त्रयीमयं कर्म विशुद्धिनिमित्त कविभिरपि च वेदेन विजिज्ञास्यमानो द्वादशधा विभज्य षट्सु वसन्तादिषु ऋतेषु यथाजोषं ऋतुगुणान् विदधाति ।।

तमेतमिह पुरुषस्त्रय्या विद्यया वर्णाश्रमाचारानुरूपया उच्चावचैः कर्मभिराम्नातैर्योगवितानैश्च श्रद्धया भजन्तोऽञ्जसा श्रेयः समधिगच्छन्ति ।

It is no other than the glorious omnipotent Lord Narayana, the most ancient person, the ultimate cause of the whole universe and He Himself, is who is critically inquired into by the Vedas as well as by the wise, that for the welfare of all living beings splits up His body in the form of Time, symbolized by the year—the theme of the three Vedas—Rigveda, Yajurveda, and Samaveda, which is responsible for the right performance of rituals into twelve parts (the twelve months) and manifests by turns, in the six seasons, spring etc., the distinctive characteristics in the form of heat and cold, showers and winds etc., of each season, so as to provide the Jivas with the means of reaping the fruits of their past actions. In the case of those who worship Him through rituals of final beatitude, in the case of those who worship Him through Bhaktiyoga, Karmayoga, Gnanayoga and so on, duly attain His blessings.

Some people declare the stellar sphere as capable of being meditated upon through deep concentration of a form of Lord Vasudeva

एतदुहैव भगवतो विष्णोः सर्वं देवतामयं रूपमहरहः सन्ध्यायां प्रयतो वाग्य निरीक्षमाणः उपतिष्ठेत नमो ज्योतिर्लोकाय कालायनायानिमिषां पतये महापुरुषायाभिधीमहीति ।

ग्रहर्क्षतारामयमाधिदैविकं पापापहं मन्त्रकृतां त्रिकालम् ।
नमस्तः स्मरतो वा त्रिकालं नश्येत तत्कालजमाशु पापम् ।।

And actually fixing one's gaze on this very form of Lord Vishnu, representing all the gods, in the evening from day to day, one should wait with a concentrated mind upon the same with the following (prayer) silently: " Hail to the Supreme Person (manifesting Himself as) the wheel of Time—the backbone of the luminaries—the Ruler of all the gods! (Thus) do we meditate on Him."

Why Ashtakshara is the most vital manthra?

There are various names of Lord Vishnu which are used on different occasions by his devotees. Among the various names of the Lord such as, Vasudeva, Govinda, Narayana, Vamana etc., which are meditated upon for protection of the body, the name of Narayana is used for the protection of vital breaths. That particular name which protects the vital breath *i.e.*, life, is more important than other names which protect the body. Hence, Astakshara, of which the kernel is Narayana, that which protects the breath, is more important than other manthras which protect the various parts of the body. Our seers who were great experts in interpreting spiritual phenomena have experienced these truths and recorded the experience of their inspired revelation. We take it for granted that they have experienced absolute truths and revealed them to posterity. Whether in the Bhagavatha and other scriptures the sayings of the ancient seers based on their revelations were really inspired and should form the subject matter of a separate article.

Reverting to the subject under discussion the people of Vraja were surprised when Lord Krishna killed Pootana, the demoness. Veda Vyasa makes them say certain prayers to the various deities who preside over the welfare of the various members of the human body and to Lord Narayana who controls the breath. Sometimes particular names of the Lord are used as a protection against

evils while doing the work of every day life. When we want protection for the feet, we call for Lord Aja. The name Manima symbolises the Lord with Kaustubha gem who protects your knees. Lord Yatha is supposed to protect your thighs. Achuta protects your loins; Hayagriva your abdomen; Kesava your heart, Isa your bosom and Ina your throat; Vishnu, the all-pervading spirit, your arms; Urukrama your mouth, and Iswara, the supreme spirit your head. Let the deity with the discus stand before you and Sri Hari behind you and let the slayer of Madhu and Aja stand on your two sides. Lord Vamana overhead, the rider of Garuda on the ground and Sankarsana on all sides.

May Lord Narayana protect the vital breaths. Vasudeva protects the intellect and Aniruddha the mind, Pradyumna the understanding and Sankarshana the ego. May Govinda protect you while you are at play, Madhava while lying down, Vaikuntha while walking, the Lord of Sri while seated and the Enjoyer of sacrifices, (inspiring terror in all evil spirits), while you are dining. The relevant passage in Sanskrit from the Bhagavatha 10th Skandha 6th Chapter is given in the foot-note at the end of this article.*

Thus it is clear that though ' Sri Vasudevaya Namaha ' (Dwadasakshara) and various other mantras are used in our prayers to the Lord, they are considered to be less vital than ' Om Namo Narayanaya.' The Lord of vital breath is more important than the Lord of the limbs or other organs of the body.

---

*अव्यादजोऽङ्घ्रि मणिमा तव जान्वथोरू यज्ञोऽच्युतः कटितटं जठरं हयास्यः
हृत् केशवस्त्युदुर ईश इनस्तु कण्ठं विष्णुर्भुजं मुखमुरुक्रम ईश्वरः कम् ।।
चक्रयग्रतः सहगदो हरिरस्तु पश्चात् त्वपार्श्वयोर्धनुरसी मधुहाजनश्च ।
कीणेषु शङ्ख मुरुगाय उपर्युपेन्द्रस्तार्क्ष्यः क्षितौ हलधर पुरुषः समन्तात् ।।

इन्द्रियाणि हृषीकेशः प्राणान् नारायणोऽवतु ।
श्वेतद्वीपपतिश्चित्तं मनो योगेश्वरोऽवतु ।।
पृश्निगर्भस्तु ते बुद्धिमात्मानं भगवान् परः ।
क्रीडन्तं पातु गोविन्दः शयानं पातु माधवः ।।
व्रजन्तमव्याद् वैकुण्ठ आसीनं त्वां श्रियःपतिः ।
भुञ्जानं यज्ञभुक् पातु सर्वग्रह भयंकरः ।।

Bhagavatham.

In a similar anecdote in the Chandogya Upanishad, 5th Chapter, once a question was raised as to which was the greatest among the members of the human body, whether it is the tongue, the mouth, or the eyes, whether it is the legs or the mind or the vital breath. *It was said that the prana or breath was the most important.* When mouth did not speak, the body was functioning and eyes were seeing, mind was thinking etc. When eyes did not see, the other organs of the body like mouth, nose, hands, feet were functioning. When the hearing was not there, the person was functioning as a deaf person. When one could not speak, he was functioning as a dumb person. But when the breath stopped and life left, the person was dead.

ओं यो हवै ज्येष्ठ च श्रेष्ठं च वेद ज्येष्ठश्च ।
हवै श्रेष्ठश्च भवति प्राणो वाव ज्येष्ठश्च श्रेष्ठश्च ।।

Chandogya Upanishad.

न वै वाचो न चक्षूंषि न श्रोत्राणि न मनांसीत्याचक्षते ।
प्राणा इत्येवाचक्षते प्रणो ह्येवैतानि सर्वाणि भवति ।।

Chandogya Upanishad.

Hence it was decided that prana was more important than anything else to the human body.

It seems relevant in this connection to refer to the five factors which contribute to success of human endeavours—the body, the actor, the various energies, the diverse organs and last but not least, the 5th and the most important is the Grace of Providence. As said in the 18th Chapter of the Gita, the last factor, that is essential favour, is associated with the Presiding Deity. There is a reference to the Presiding Deity in the 6th skanda of the Bhagavatha pertaining to the Narayana Kavacha. How from morning to night, every two hours one Deity and also during night various Deities are in charge for every two hours and prayers can be offered to the Presiding Deities of these respective hours. There are guardian angels for the 8 directions in the world called Ashta Dikpalakas including Indra, Varuna, Yama, Kubera etc. Just as we pray to the various Deities presiding over various kalas, we also pray to Maha Vishnu (Supreme Being) who controls the various activities such as sitting, walking, talking, sleeping, meditating and so on.

The vital breath (or breath of life) controlled by Narayana has to be protected more carefully than the organs of the human body. Narayana is the presiding deity for the breath. As the Ashtakshara Manthra pertains to the deity presiding over or controlling the vital breaths, it is more important than any other mantra. Taking this into account, Vedanta Desika and other Acharyas have emphasised on the necessity for surrendering oneself completely to the Lord Narayana, the all-pervading spirit. The relevant verses are given below:—

चरणं पवित्रं विततं पुराणं येन पूतस्तरति दुष्कृतानि ।
तेन पवित्रेण शुद्धेन ताः अतिपाप्मान मरातिं तरेम ।।

Man gets rid of evil because he is purified by the holy, all pervading, eternal presence of the effulgent Being. May we be free from taint of sin, our great enemy and rendered pure by that ever holy presence that purifies all.

Taitreya Aranyaka—IX-2.

नास्था धर्मे न वसुनिचये नैव कामोपभोगे
यद्भाव्यं भवतु भगवन् पूर्वकर्मानुरूपम् ।
एतत् प्रार्थ्यं मम बहुमतं जन्मजन्मान्तरेऽपि
त्वत्पादाम्भोरुहयुगगता निश्चला भक्तिरस्तु ।।

Lord! I do not care for meritorious acts, wealth, or the enjoyment of the objects of the senses. Let destiny guide me according to my previous Karma. But my cherished desire is that I should be endowed with love unshaken for Thy lotus feet in this life, as well as in lives to come.

(*Kulasekhara*) *Mukundamalai.*

Various forms of worship.

In matters of faith and religion, we raise our imagination above reason. Though there is only one God, He is worshipped in various forms and called by various names. There are adequate reasons for this. People in the world have got various desires and they have also got various temperaments. Just as various people require different medicines, it is necessary for people to worship God in their own way. In the third discourse of the Second

Skanda of Bhagavatha, it is pointed out that for the fulfilment of desires, there are various ways of worshipping the deities.

It is said a seeker of pre-eminence in sacred knowledge should worship the sage Brihaspati (the preceptor of the gods). This is based on the principle "what thou thinkest thou becomest." This means trying to become perfect in a particular respect. No human being is perfect. One can only become relatively perfect. The sacred knowledge is deified and personified. If a person is saturated with sacred knowledge, the quality of sacredness pre-dominates in him. Brihaspati, who is represented as preceptor to the gods, must excel others in sacredness. If a person worships Brihaspati, he is bound to become more sacred. This is the scientific explanation and practical reason for such a worship.—

ब्रह्मवर्चसकामस्तु यजते ब्रह्मणस्पतिम् ।

He who seeks to acquire keenness of senses should worship Indra. Indra is considered to be the Lord of senses. If one is saturated with the thought of Indra for the sake of keenness of the senses, he is bound to have a preponderating speciality of sense development. The outward worship of Indra with the desire of developing one's senses will automatically develop his inward senses. This is necessary in order to attain perfection of the senses.—इन्द्रमिन्द्रियकामस्तु ।

The seeker of prosperity should worship the divine Maya (the Goddess presiding over Prakrithi or Primordial Matter). It is said in the Sristuthi of Vedantha Desika that the Goddess Lakshmi is not only the deity who confers material benefit but also spiritual salvation.—देवीं मायां तु श्रीकामः ।

The seeker of indefatigable energy should adore the god of fire. It is well-known that all the Hindu homas (sacrifices with oil, ghee, pulses and cereals) are offered to the fire. When sacrifices are made to fire, the articles of sacrifice are supposed to go to the force which is the cause of fire.—तेजस्कामो विभावसुम् ।

The seeker of progeny should propitiate the Prajapatis (gods presiding over creation); the Prajapatis are those who are the original gods, who by their supernatural powers started creation.

powers of creation. This is also founded on reason. This is a question of approaching with a purpose the deities presiding over creation. We get their power in varying degrees when we start worshipping such deities. Art is the utterance of life. It is the imitation of nature in the manner of her operation. The force that guides nature is God. The Prajapatis may be considered to be behind the power of nature, which gives progeny. If a person approaches such a deity, he is likely to be benefited with progeny. This is the sum and substance of the belief behind that worship.—

प्रजाकामः प्रजापतीन् ।

Similarly, one who seeks wealth should worship the class of gods known as Vasus. In this connection, one is reminded of the name of Vasishta which means one who is wealthy. The wealth of Vasishta was not this ordinary wealth. Once he was the minister of Dasaratha, but he ignored material wealth and preferred to give spiritual advice and developed spiritually. The worship of Vasus for the sake of wealth indeed confers worldly riches on people but this is not so lasting as the wealth which will be conferred by spiritual development. Still the fact remains that such worships of deities for material wealth have their reward.—वसुकामो वसून् ।

The person who aspires for more power should worship the class of gods called the Rudras (manifestations of Lord Siva). For some people, Rudram, Chamakam etc., are prescribed for daily worship according to ceremonial and sacrificial rites. Rudram in which the first sentence starts with salutation to Rudra is said to be very beneficial, conferring more power and prosperity on the worshipper. This is a common kind of worship among Hindus. Rudras are very powerful and energetic gods and they transmit their power and energy to their devotees. This is the significance of prescribing Rudram for recitation daily in the morning—

रुद्रान् वीर्यकामोऽथ वीर्यवान् ।

One who seeks food and food stuffs should worship Aditi (the mother of the gods). The mother earth is said to be very patient. She produces not only food stuffs but many other precious and valuable things. If earth, the mother of all the human beings, can produce foodstuffs, the mother of the gods can produce food and foodstuffs beyond measure. The idol of food and foodstuffs is

said to be the mother of the gods, who is perfect in this respect. If one approaches the mother of the gods, who is perfect in food and foodstuffs, one can get the favour of that Goddess and abound in food and foodstuffs.—अन्नाद्यकामस्त्वदितिम् ।

He who seeks to go to heaven should adore the sons of Aditi, who are called Adityas. As said in the Amarakosa, there are 12 Adityas. Aditya means Sun. The place of the Sun is the abode of the first Purusha. If you worship the Adityas (similar to the worship in the Gayatri) you will go to heaven. This is a practical reason behind this worship.—स्वर्गकामो दितेः सुतान् ।

A seeker of long life should worship the twin gods, the Aswini Devatas (the physicians of the gods). If one meditates for a long time always thinking of long life, and meditates on Aswini Devatas and performs pujas, it is believed that the Aswini Devatas who are the physicians of gods can confer medicine for the prolongation of life. If one tries to approach the gods who have got longest lives and who give medicines for all illnesses, a person will not get illness but will have long life. This is the practical reason behind this worship.—आयुष्कामोऽश्विनौ देवौ ।

One who seeks after renown should worship Lord Vishnu who is considered to be the deity presiding over sacrifices. He is the Purusha behind yagna. That Lord who presides over sacrifices is brought out in the Ramayana when Aswamedha and Putrakāmeshti yāgas are performed. The Lord appeared in the form of Yagnapurusha. When the ocean was churned by the Daityas desirous of having nectar, there arose Vishnu. Yagnapurusha descended from a portion of the very Divine Vishnu. He was the well-known Dhanwantari, the father of Ayurveda and the enjoyer of the sacrifice. Lord Vishnu, assumed the form of a female, highly wonderful and above description in order to divert the attention of the Asuras and he succeeded. If a seeker of renown has always in his mind the Lord who confers the renown, he becomes saturated with the renown and his mind and body are affected by his thoughts, and the sacrifices he makes enables him to approach the deity and the seeker himself ultimately becomes renowned.—यज्ञं यजेत् यशस्कामः ।

The seeker of treasures should adore Varuna, the god who presides over the waters. Every day in the prayers in the evenings,

one chanting mantra is इमं मे वरुण: as part of prayer and it is considered to be an important mantra.—कोशकाम:प्राचेतसम् ।

He who wants to acquire learning should worship Lord Siva. It is said that Siva's learning is unlimited and he is represented as perfection of learning. If one worships Siva, he will become much more learned; just as in the material sphere human beings show respect to great men, who confer benefits on those who seek their favour, the various deities also confer benefit in a larger measure on their worshippers.—विद्याकामस्तु गिरिशम् ।

He who wants to lead a perfectly pious life should worship Lord Vishnu of excellent renown. It is said that God in his manifestation as Vishnu comes in a very presentable form and leads an exemplary life. It is not necessary in this context to describe the qualities of Vishnu as contained in Sri Ramanuja's introduction to the Gita. In Vishnu, God has manifested himself as a pious person. Hence it is necessary to worship Lord Vishnu for acquiring piety. In the Vishnu Sahasranama, it is said that Vishnu is easily accessible and pious.—धर्माय उत्तमलोकम् ।

Those who have no desires at all or who desire all the things combined, or those persons of noble understanding that seek for salvation should with rapt reverence worship the Primeval Person (Purushothama).

अकामस्सर्वकामो मोक्षकामो उदारधी: ।
तीव्रेण भक्तियोगेन यजेत पुरुषं परम् ।।

As for the basis and theory of prapatti or self-surrender according to those who believe in transmigration of souls when the Jivatma leaves one body it enters into another, and so on successively, until the soul has become sufficiently purified to be ranked among those which, in the fulness of time, the Creator considers worthy of everlasting bliss. Although the doctrine of transmigration of souls is commonly known, many men and women do not find adequate reason for believing in it, since there are very few persons who can remember the different transmigrations of their souls. It ordinarily happens that when a soul leaves a body in which it has been confined and enters into another, it loses all recollection either of the knowledge it had acquired or of the

events in which it played a part. Thus our errors are continually hidden from us, and we embark upon a new career with a soul as fresh, and as prone to error and vice.

Moreover if the soul were to carry with it the memories of its past in its transmigrations, it would be unavoidably weighed down by the fetters of such memories and perhaps more preoccupied by memories of what it had been than what it has to be and might neglect the duties proper in its present abode and so ruffle the harmony of the universe instead of preserving such harmony.

Hence, our souls, fated to pass from body to body throughout a long cycle of centuries, would nearly always be miserable if they remembered what they had been. A soul, for instance, which had once animated the body of a king, could not avoid keen pangs on finding itself housed in a reptile, or in the carcass or one of those obscure mortals whose misery makes them still more to be pitied. A man who found himself in the lap of luxury, or raised to a high position might, if he remembered having been a worm, abuses the affluent position which the goodness of providence had ordained for him. The doctrine of surrender wants to allay the fears of the believers by promising something for the repentant sinner and the theist.

न नाकपृष्ठं नचसार्वभौमं न पारमेष्ठ्यं न रसाधिपत्यम् ।
न योगसिद्धिर्नपुनर्भवं वा वाञ्छन्ति यत्पादरजः प्रपन्नाः ।।

Bhagavatha—Skanda—10—*Chapter* 16

A similar idea is better expressed in the following Pasuram

பச்சைமா மலைபோல் மேனி பவளவாய் கமலச்செங்கண்
அச்சுதா அமரரேறே ஆயர்தம் கொழுந்தே—எனும்
இச்சுவை தவிர யான்போய் இந்திர லோகமாளும்
அச்சுவை பெறினும் வேண்டேன், அரங்கமா நகருளானே.

Having secured the dust of your feet, neither covet the upper most (heaven) nor the rulership of the entire globe the position of Brahma nor the dominions, nor the subterranean regions nor the mystic powers of yoga.

The idea of surrender is also expressed in sukta—

चन्द्रां प्रभासां यशसा ज्वलन्तीं, श्रियं लोके देवजुष्टामुदाराम् ।
तां पद्मिनींगुम् शरणमहं प्रपद्येऽलक्ष्मीर्मे नश्यतां त्वां वृणे ॥

I take refuge in Sri who is delightful, who has a shining form, who is worshipped by the gods or who is loved by Narayana, who is bounteous in Her gifts, and who has the lotus for Her weapon. May the Alakshmi go away from me, invoke you, O Lakshmi.

A repentant sinner turns over a new leaf. His faith and actions turn towards God who helps those who help themselves.

"Vishnu Sahasranama"

किमेकं दैवतं लोके किं वाऽप्येकं परायणम् ।
स्तुवन्तः किं कमर्चन्तः प्राप्नुयुर्मानवाः शुभम् ॥
को धर्मः सर्वधर्माणां भवतः परमो मतः ।
किं जपन् मुच्यते जन्तुर्जन्मसंसारबन्धनात् ॥

Who may be said to be the one god in the world? Who may be said to be the one object which is our sole refuge? Who is he by worshipping whom or humming whose praises human beings would get what is beneficial? What religion, is that which, according to thy judgement, is the foremost of all religions? What are those Mantras by reciting which a living creature becomes freed from the bonds of birth, disease and death?

Devotion to the Lord Narayana is superior to worships for the gratification of desires. Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. Daily prayers of a general nature should be recited without fail. As soon as the man is one with God, he will not beg. He will then see prayer in all action. " The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the prayer of the rover kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature, though for cheap ends " Ralph Waldo Emerson. Prayer is its own reward.

Vishnu is one great element or substance which has spread itself out into multifarious forms. Covering the three worlds, He the soul of all things, enjoys them all. His glory knows no dimi-

nution, and He it is that is the Enjoyer of the universe (as its supreme Lord). This hymn in praise of the illustrious Vishnu, composed by Vyasa, should be recited by that person who wishes to acquire happiness and that which is the highest benefit *viz.*, Emancipation.

In Vishnu Sahasranama, there are no tricks and miracles dealt with. This only pertains to the praise of God and His works and His thousand names. Any reasonable human being will mention the various attributes of God. In Sahasranama, at one place 'Putatman' is mentioned. He is the cleansed soul. Though He is the lord and ruler of all existent objects, yet He is dissociated from them.

All things have sprung from the union of Prakriti and Purusha-Vasudeva is Lord. He is also called soul of existent and non-existent things and these get merged in him in the universal dissolution. Sambhu is a name of Siva which is applied to Vishnu also. His birth has not been determined by extraneous circumstances or other influences but by His own wish, while the birth of all creatures have been determined by forces extraneous to themselves.

Sahasranama does not insist on many rituals. It mentions that people of all castes and all people who worship the Lord get material benefits and spiritual salvation. It begins with the God of the world who may be said to be the one object which may be the sole refuge and the object of the foremost of religions. By always worshipping with reverence that immutable Being and by praising Him, who is without beginning or end or destruction, one can succeed in transcending all sorrow.

On the advent of primitive Yuga, all creatures spring from Him and on the expiration of the Yuga, all things disappear in Him. He is called "Aprameya," which literally means immeasurable. He has no such attribute as sound. In consequence He is not the object of the dire perception by the senses nor can He be the object of inference.

This Sahasranama confers benefits on those who recite it though this is a general prayer and cannot be labelled under any restrictive category. One gets saturated with the name of the Lord and His good works while reciting Sahasranama. It follows

full of qualities of the Lord on whom he is meditating. The Devotee will realise the fruits of reciting Sahasranama (or the fruits of any prayer), though there is no regular Sankalpa for it. This is why Sahasranama is the highest form of prayer.

In the first sloka of Vedantha Desika's " Sree Sthuthi," praise of Mahalakshmi, it is said that Mahalakshmi confers material and spiritual benefits on Her worshippers.

Here one is reminded of the doctrine of Prapatti *i.e.*, absolute surrender that which purifies a man. But if a man resorts to some of his old objectionable practices after the prapatti, he relapses into sin. Indeed, by complete self-surrender, it is possible for one to transform oneself. The fact remains that the crude nature part of Prakriti may push one back into old sinful ways. In the case of this Bhagavannama, it is itself a purifier and it springs from within a man and it rests with oneself to utter the names of God. Prapatti requires the guidance of the Guru or the preceptor before whom certain formalities have to be undergone and certain special restrictions—fastings, negations and some rituals—have to be observed. In the case of simple utterance of the thousand names of God, such observances are not necessary and one can, at his own convenience, recite these names.

Therefore know the chanting of the names and praises of Lord Vishnu as a source of blessing to the world and for the complete atonement for the greatest sins. The mind is not purified so well through fasting and other means as through devotion easily engendered in the heart of those who repeatedly hear the accounts of the exploits of Hari.

Sahasranama confers material and spiritual benefit on the devotee. The mortal who takes refuge in Vasudeva and who becomes devoted to Him becomes free from all sins and attains emancipation. That man who with devotion and faith recites the Sahasranama succeeds in acquiring felicity of soul, forgiveness of disposition, prosperity, intelligence, memory and fame. Neither wrath, nor jealousy, nor cupidity, nor evil understanding, ever appears in those men of righteousness who are devoted to that foremost of Beings. The firmament with the sun, moon and stars, the welkin, the points of the compass, the earth, and the ocean, are

all held and supported by the prowess of the high-souled Vasudeva. Conduct is said to be the foremost of all topics treated of in the scriptures. righteousness has conduct for its basis. The unfading Vasudeva is said to be the lord of righteousness. The Rishis, the Pitrus, the deities, the great elements, the metals, indeed, the entire mobile and immobile universe,have sprung from Narayana Yoga, the Sankhya Philosophy, knowledge ,all mechanical arts, the Vedas, the diverse scriptures, and all learning, have sprung from Janardana. Vishnu is the great element or substance which has spread itself out into multifarious forms. His glory knows no diminution.

Value of Uttering Hari's Name:
(*With an Illustration*)

In Kanyakubja there lived a certain Brahman, Ajamila by name, who had kept a maidservant as his concubine casting to the winds all rules of ethical conduct. Making a reproachful living by robbery, gambling, cheating and theft and maintaining his family, the impious fellow tortured living beings. As he maintained existence, fondling the offspring of the " kept " woman, a considerable period, equivalent to eighty-eight years of his life, rolled by. The old man had ten sons; the youngest of them, Narayana by name was yet a child and was greatly loved by his parents. Having fastened his heart on that sweetly lisping infant, the old man felt extremely delighted while watching it play. Feeding it while taking his meals or eating anything, bound as he was by love of the child, the silly man did not perceive the coming of death.

Thus continuing life, the fool thought of his juvenile son, named Narayana, when the hour of death arrived. Beholding three most terrible male figures with wry faces and hair standing on end, that had come to take him, noose in hand, *Ajamila* agitated in mind, called in a loud tone by name his son, Narayana, who was busy with playthings away at a distance. Hearing the loud utterance of Sri Hari's name by the dying man, who was calling, though unconsciously the name of their Master Bhagavan, Narayana, His attendants rushed to the spot all of a sudden. The messengers of Lord Vishnu stopped by force the servants of Yama, that were

tearing Ajamila. Forbidden, the servants of Yama asked them " Who are you that interfere thus with the authority of Yama? Whose are you or whence have you come, and wherefore do you forbid his being taken away? Are you gods or demi-gods or some foremost Siddhas? With eyes resembling the petals of a lotus and clad in yellow silk, you are all adorned with a diadem, a pair of ear-rings and a shining wreath of lotuses. Besides, you are all in the bloom of youth and all possessed of four lovely arms and graced with a bow, quiver, sword, mace, conch, discus and lotus. Driving away the darkness of the quarters and overshadowing other lights by your splendour, what for do you hinder us the servants of Yama?"

In reply to the questions asked by those messengers of Yama, the servants of Lord Vasudeva laughed heartily and addressed the following words to them in a voice sounding as the rumbling of clouds.

" If you are really servants of Yama, tell us the true character of virtue and also the means of attaining it. How is punishment meted out and who is intended to be its object. Are you, the doers, subject to punishment or some of the human species?"

Yama's Messengers said: " Because this fellow, who, having violated the scriptures, acted according to his own will and was censured by worthy men, led a sinful life and lived for a long time in an impure state, eating the food polluted by the touch of a harlot, we shall accordingly take this sinner (who has made no atonement), to Yama where he will be purified through punishment."

Vishnu Dutas replied: " This man has actually made atonement even for sins committed through millions of lives in that he uttered, though in a helpless state, the name of Sri Hari, which is a means to the attainment of emancipation. The atonement for the sins of this sinner must have been made by the mere fact that he pronounced a mere semblance of the four-syllabled name of the Lord, Narayana, while exclaiming " Narayana come " (calling his son)—the articulation of a name of Lord Vishnu—that is the only thorough atonement for the sins of all classes of sinners."

Thus by the utterance of the name Narayana even a person who led a sinful life was emancipated.

तस्मात्संकीर्तनं विष्णोर्जगन्मङ्गलमंहसाम् ।
महतामपि कौरव्य विद्धयेकान्तिकनिष्कृतम् ।।

श्रृण्बतां गृणतां वीर्याण्युद्दामानि हरेर्मुहुः ।
सुजातयात्म भक्त्यात्म शुचाद्धयेन्नात्मात्रतादिभिः ।।

कृष्णाङ्घ्रिपद्ममधुलिण्नपुनर्बिसृष्ट-
  मायागुणेषु रमते वृजिनावहेषु ।
अन्यस्तु कामहत आत्मरजः प्रमार्ष्टु-
  मीहेत कर्म यत एव रजः पुनः स्यात् ।।

Srimad Bhagavatha 6*th Skanda—Dis. III*

The chanting of the names and praises of Lord Vishnu is a source of blessing to the world and the complete atonement of the greatest of sins. The mind is not so purified through fasting and other means as through devotion easily engendered in the heart of those who repeatedly hear or narrate about exploits of Hari.

A sinner is not purified to that extent through fasting and other processes of expiation recommended by the *Sastras* as by uttering the names of Hari which puts him in mind of the attributes of the Lord which draw the man towards the Lord unlike the other forms of expiation in wiping out the sins for, the process of expiation is not complete if one's mind runs back to evil ways even after the said process has been gone through.

Origin and greatness of Ramayana.

Ramayana, immortal Epic of Valmiki, is one of the greatest works in Sanskrit literature. If there is one text, which more than any other, distinguishes the true from the false in art, a work that assimilates itself with the mental constitution of a nation contributing to clearness of thought and ennobles the higher emotions and aspirations, it is Ramayana. Rama has become a house-hold word in Hindu Society. The memories of incidents celebrated in the Epic pass current amongst all ranks of the people, in Hindu society.

Sita has become an ideal to Hindu women as the embodiment of purity, chastity and wifely fidelity. Sita has taught the Hindu

women the highest and noblest conception of their duties in their various and manifold relations in their lives.

From the point of epic excellence and consistency and uniformity of execution, the Ramayana constitutes the great repository of wisdom and learning, the manners and customs of the ancient Hindus. This has been composed by an illustrious ascetic Valmiki passing his days in a hermitage in meditation and in the practice of rigid austerities and self-denial.

The first chapter of Balakanda is itself Sankshepa Ramayana *i.e.*, an epitome of Ramayana. The chapter narrates important stories and moral lessons in a summary manner. The second chapter of the first Kandam (Bālakāndam) contains how and why Rāmāyana was composed by the sage Valmiki. There is more than ordinary significance attached to the second sarga of the Rāmāyana. The second sarga is associated with a story. After all, Ramayana is teaching dharma or duty by parables and stories. The first sarga starts with the ascetic Vālmiki asking the best of sages *i.e.*, Nārada about a person who has got sacred qualities and endowed with prowess, who is dutiful, graceful, truthful and firm in vow, who is qualified by virtue of his character and who is ever studious for the welfare of all his creatures.

कोन्वस्मिन्साप्रतं लोके गुणवान्कश्च वीर्यवान् ।
धर्मज्ञश्च कृतज्ञश्च सत्यवाक्यो दृढव्रतः ।।
चारित्रेण च को युक्तस्सर्वभूतेषु को हितः ।
विद्वान्कः कस्समर्थश्च कश्चैकप्रियदर्शनः ।।

In reply the sage Narada described to him the qualities of Sr Rama, the son of Dasaratha, king of Ayodhya and narrated the story of the Ramayana in brief. After hearing the words of Narada, Valmiki went to Tamasa nearby Jahnavi river, started talking to Bharadwaja, his disciple. In the vicinity of that forest, he saw a pair of Kraunchas (birds) giving melodious notes. At this juncture, a fowler slew the male Kraunchа. His help-mate began to bewail in piteous accents at the separation from her copper-crested male partner, who erstwhile was engaged in sport. When the Rishi saw this, he felt exceedingly grievous and beholding the crying Krauncha, he spoke to the fowler these words:

मानिषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वमगमः शाश्वतीः समाः ।
यत्क्रौञ्चमिथुनादेकमवधीः काममोहितम् ।।

"Oh! fowler, you will not attain salvation; because of your inordinate desire you killed one of the partners of the Kraunchas."

Revolving thus in mind, he said to his disciple Bharadwaja that the verse he composed was of equal feet accents and could be chanted according to measure to the accompaniment of stringed instruments and let it be a sloka.

If attributed to Bhagavan with his consort Mahalakshmi "May you live for many ages because you relieved the world of a Rakshasha like Ravana."

He went to his hermitage. It came to pass that the effulgent Brahma, as though he wanted to see Valmiki, arrived at his hermitage. Sage Valmiki stood up with reverence and received him with due rites. The sage Valmiki recited the same sloka to Brahma. Brahma said that the verse he had composed would attain celebrity. He also added that He, Brahma, had to recast those verses that had come out of the lips of the sage Valmiki and He blessed Valmiki and asked him to compose the entire history of Rama. Brahma added that as long as the mountains and the seas exist on earth, Valmiki's history of Ramayana will spread among men. If the accents are changed and the meanings referred to, the sloka composed by Valmiki for cursing the hunter, becomes one of praise for Lord Vishnu and his consort Mahalakshmi and that verse had formed the basis of Valmiki's composition of 24,000 slokas of the Ramayana.

After having received the blessings of Brahma, Valmiki sat facing the East on a cushion of kusa grass, and sipping holy water, he addressed himself to the contemplation of the subject through yoga. By virtue of his yoga powers, he clearly observed before him Rama, and Lakshmana, and Sita and Dasaratha together with his wives in his kingdom, laughing, talking, acting and behaving as in real life. He visualised Rama's birth, his mighty prowess, and kindness to all, popularity, forbearance, goodness, truthfulness and the wonderful conversation he had with Viswamitra, snapping of the bow, his marriage with Janaki, the hostility of Rama with Parasurama, installation of Sri Rama, the enmity of Kaikeyi,

the obstacle in the way of installation, the exile of Sri Rama, the grief of the subjects, the crossing of the Ganges, Rama's meeting with Bharadwaja, his arrival at Chitrakuta in accordance with the injunctions of Bharadwaja, Rama's building a Kuteeram there and sojourn, Bharata's arrival and his propitiation of Rama, Rama's offering oblations to the manes of his father, installation of the Paduka, Bharata's dwelling at Nandi-grama, Rama's movement to Dandaka and destruction of Viradha, Rama's interview with Sarabhanga and meeting with Sutikshna, Sita's companionship with Anasuya, her painting the former; Rama's interview with Agastya, his obtaining the bow from him, the story of Surpanakah and her disfigurement, the slaughter of Khara and Tricira, the attempts of Ravana, the destruction of Maricha, the abduction of Sita, vulture Jatayu's death, Rama's encounter with Kabandha (a headless demon), Rama's interview with Sabari and his being sustained there on fruits and roots, Rama's lamentations at Pampa, meeting with Hanuman, interviewing Sugriva, encountering Vali and establishing Sugriva on the throne and so on till the end of Ramayana, establishment of Rama Rajya and Rama's departure to Vaikunta, etc.

Chapter III of Balakanda in the story of Ramayana is a list of contents. It is a speciality of Valmiki to introduce the whole story in the first sarga and then give the significance *i.e.*, (1) epitome of the Ramayana, (2) origin of Ramayana and (3) headliness of various chapters and important occurrences in the chronological order. This shows it is an epic par excellence.

In Ramayana, Sundarakanda is considered to be the most beautiful Kanda. Also it is called Sundarakanda because it is dominated by Hanuman in the first instance and Sita later on. Sundara denotes monkey. In the 31st and the 35th sargas, a summary of the story of Ramayana and the glory of Sri Rama appears, (especially in chapter 35 of the Sundarakanda). In chapter 58, there is again a recapitulation of the story of Ramayana. Besides, Hanuman, a symbol of intelligence, assures Sita, who is considered to be equivalent to the mind; of salvation *viz.*, going to Paramatma, Sri Rama. The mind is wavering. Intelligence is able to conquer the fickle mind and assures the mind of reaching Purushothama, Sri Rama or salvation. This is part of the esoteric meaning in Ramayana.

In the Sundarakanda, there are quite a number of aphorisms given. Indeed, throughout the Ramayana, there are many, especially in the Sundarakanda which is considered to be the best for daily religious study, such things as when great men find anything omitted but ought to have been done from the public point of view they get annoyed:

कर्तव्यां मकृतं कार्यं सतां मन्युमुदीरयेत् ।

When Hanuman appeared before Ravana and talked in a fearless manner after he surrendered to the bonds of Brahmastra, *inter alia* he told Ravana that best men are not sent outside. Only other than best men are sent out. Best men are kept in the key positions in the country and not sent outside. The greatest dharma is kindness. Fortune is always fickle and fortune and misfortune go to the rich as well as the poor, to the high and the low. Here also the wisdom of Hanuman is shown when he went back from Lanka and told Rama without keeping him in suspense that he saw Sita, emphasising on his seeing Sita and starting his conversation, giving positive information to Rama about the success of his mission. Herein lies the beauty of the composition.

Negation of Atheism in Ramayana and the scriptures.

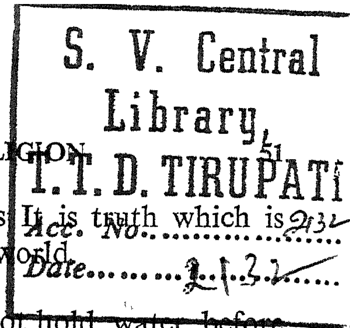
" Little Philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, depth in Philosophy brings him about to religion " said Bacon. In Ramayana of Valmiki, in the Ayodhyakanda 108th Sarga, Rishi Jabali points out.

अर्थधर्मपरा ये ये तांस्ताञ्छोचामि नेतरान् ।
ते हि दुःखमिह प्राप्य विनाशं प्रेत्य भेजिरे ।।

i.e., Those who pursue Dharma and Artha come to grief in this world and destruction thereby implying one should follow the pleasures of his senses.

To this Sri Rama replies in the 109th Sarga.

सत्यमेवेश्वरो लोके सत्यं पद्मा सदाश्रिता ।
सत्यमूलानि सर्वाणि सत्यान्नास्ति परं पदम् ।।



MONOTHEISM OF HINDU RELIGION

There is nothing greater than truth. God is It is truth which is the basis of all happiness and wealth in this world.

The little Philosophy of Jabali could not hold water before the reasoned and sound philosophy of Sri Rama.

Psalms of the Bible begin with an admonition against being ungodly.

> " Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

In the Christian literature the following passage inspires a man to lead a religious life:(Imitation of Christ by Thomas A. Kempis, passage which inspired George Elliot).

> " In heaven ought to be thy dwelling and all things should be looked upon as they forward their journey thither. All things pass away and thou together with them."

The doctrines of the Muslim Religion—preach 5 prayers a day, frequent lustrations, alms-giving, fasting and more important of all, adopting universal brotherhood—are consistent with the doctrine, "There is only one God and Mohammad is His Prophet."

In the Vedas truths are expressed in a direct manner. Vedas are considered to be suited to people of a very high order of spiritual evolution.

Puranas, Itihasas and Myths express the sublime truths by examples, analogies and parables. As already referred to preferences do not imply exclusions. P. Thomas in his book " Epics, Myths and Legends of India" points out how mythology has a scientific aspect. By study of comparative mythology ethnologists have been able to elucidate many obscure points of racial migrations and fusions. The similarity between certain myths of different peoples inhabiting distant regions is striking. It is true that human nature is fundamentally the same and similarity in expression of emotions and reaction to phenomena can be coincidental. Mythologists trace many Hindu, Greek and Scandinavian

myths to a common origin. Philologists even establish etymological identity of many names of Gods and Goddesses. They surmise, with good reason, that the Hindus, Germans and Greeks had a common homeland whence their forefathers migrated in prehistoric times to different parts of the world. Another analogy that interests students of comparative mythology is similarity of the Egyptian to the Indian mythological system. Not only many myths, but even manners and usages are found common to ancient Egyptians and Indians. Like Indians, the Egyptians had a sort of caste-system. Unlike the Hindu four, Egyptians had seven castes. Although rules of caste were not enforced as rigidly as in India, caste was the basis of the Egyptian social system. Egyptians worshipped the bull Apis; Nandi, Shiva's Bull, holds a unique position in Hindu (Animal) mythology.

Story telling is a regular religious institution and what was learnt in sacred lore can be seen by reading passages from Puranas and explaining the meaning of myths and legends. Almost every Hindu is conversant with the tales of Rama and Sita, the doings of Hanuman and the adventures of Mahabharatha heroes. The religion of the vast majority of the Hindus still remain in thePuranas. For a select few Vedas and Vedantas including Upanishads form the favourite sacred literature.

Among the Avatars of Lord Vishnu, Sri Rama is considered to be one of the fullest and probably the greatest. The whole of Ramayana is devoted to the teachings of the duties of an ideal husband and an ideal wife, the pure monogamy of the husband and the chastity of the wife. Sri Rama is said to have been the essence of virtue, the resplendant root of the tree of all created humanity whereof all other human beings are but flowers and fruits, leaves and branches as mentioned in the following stanza:—

मूलं ह्येष मनुष्याणां धर्मसारो महाद्युतिः ।
पुष्पं फलं च पत्रं च शाखाश्चास्येतरे जनाः ।।

The whole of Ramayana teaches duties by parables and sayings. It also teaches the lesson of protecting the good and ignoring or destroying the wicked. Those who, in the name of God or the followers of God, though indulge in indiscreet sayings are also considered to be devotees even if not of the highest class.

Dwarapalakas of the Lord Vishnu offended the Devotees of God by refusing them admission into the Sanctum-Sanctorum. The Lord took up with these Dwarapalakas and asked them whether they would prefer to enter 10 Janmas, as punishment, in the form of friends of God or 3 Janmas as the enemies of God. The Dwarapalakas preferred to take 3 births as enemies of Lord Narayana. These are manifested in Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha against Lord Narasimha, Ravana and Kumbhakarna in Ramavatara and Sisupala and Dantavakthra in Krishnavatara.

A number of aphorisms are given in the Ramayana. For instance in the Sundarakanda,

भर्ता नाम परं नार्या भूषणं भूषणादपि

For women there is no ornament more valuable than their husbands.

यथा तव तथाऽन्येषां दारा रक्ष्या (निशाचर) ।
आत्मानमुपमां कृत्वा स्वेषु दारेषु रम्यताम् ।।

Honour the wives of others and protect them as you will your own. Set an example by loving your own wife.

There is an emphasis on the duties of the Hindu wife in the Ayodhyākānda.

व्रतोपासनिरता या नारी परमोत्तमा ।
भर्तारं नानुवर्तेत सा तु पापगतिर्भवेत् ।।

Though a woman may attain a very high state by the observance of fasts and ceremonies, treads the path of sinners, if she is not devoted to her husband. Thus Sita is idealised along with Rama.

" When a snake is about to die it lies down in the middle of the road " says Soviet causases by David Tutaff. " Evils most of all on their departure show evil " says Shakespeare. Ravana just before his last battle with Sri Rama summoned all the Gods, gave them peremptory orders to act according to his bidding and because Ravana had the boon and the strength from the Gods, the Devathas carried out his wishes. It was at midnight that he gave them the

commands and the commands had to be carried out before day-break. This illustrates how, when a demon gets power, his glossy essence like an angry ape playing such fantastic tricks with high heavens, makes the Angels weep. This is what Ravana did and ultimately he was killed by Sri Rama in battle.

Rama as Superman:

Hanuman's description of Sri Rama to Sita in the 35th Sarga of Sundarakhanda is an attempt to portray Rama as a superman. Rama has got the brightness of the Sun in the complexion. In patience he is like the earth. He has eyes like that of a lotus, has good appearance and a lot of compassion. He is a protector not only of his own people but of the whole universe. He is orthodox and protects the rights of his subjects. He is well versed in the Vedas and Vedantas. He is a supreme adept in using the bow and the arrow.

Rama as an ideal king:

During Rama Rajya, the people were saved from the thieves and there was no other trouble. And the old were not constrained to perform the funeral ceremonies of the children. All were delighted and devoted to pious observances. And under Rama's regime they did not envy one another. When Rama governed the kingdom, people lived for long and had enough children—they were freed from diseases and sorrow. And the trees bore fruits and flowers perpetually–there were enough showers and the atmosphere was pleasant. The people being delighted engaged in their respective profession, and the subjects grew pious and truthful under Rama's regime, being devoted to the observance of all pious works and gifted with all auspicious marks. And Rama ruled the kingdom as a father to his subjects.

Five aspect glory of Sri Rama:

Sri Rama is held to be the supreme Brahma by some, a manifestation on earth of Bhagavan Vishnu by others, a superman by the third, an ideal king by the fourth and a mythological figure by yet another. All the five types of reverence to Rama have got their special significance.

God is one without a second, the very embodiment of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss combined. It is an absolute truth that nothing exists apart from Him. Truths known to man are relative. Knowledge and reality are in the clutches of relativity. Being devoid of a Maya-made form, He is spoken of as 'formless' and being free from attributes of Maya, he is declared as attributeless. His form and His attributes are His very Being. That is why though eternally formless and eternally attributeless in the above sense, He is eternally embodied because He is possessed of a form and attributes which constitute His very Being. He manifests Himself in numerous forms suited to the particular sports. This is Vibhava Lila. All these forms are equally real and eternal. Though diverse, they are ever identical ;herein lies the glory of His divinity. The same Lord is the supreme indestructible Brahma, the very embodiment of Truth, Knowledge, and Bliss. Mahanarayana-Upanishad describes God as formless, representing time, Vishnu and Siva etc. Sri Ramanuja in Gita Bashya expatiates on the untarnished qualities of Bhagwan. His character is indescribable and unthinkable. It is the height of folly, therefore to wonder how He can be attributeless, formless, unmanifest.

In the 35th Chapter of Sundarakānda, on being questioned by Sita as to how monkeys and men met on terms of brotherhood and what the regal signs that deck the persons of Rama and Lakshmana were, Hanuman described idealising Rama as under: In effulgence he is like the Sun, in patience like the earth, in intellect like Brihaspati and in fame like Vasava (the Lord of celestials). He is the protector of the world. He follows the right in all his ways and never swerves from his royal duties and is the slayer of foes. He is wise, fitted with a good character, humble and the slayer of foes. He is broad-shouldered, large-armed, has a conch-like neck and a beautiful countenance. He has the voice of a bugle, is of a cool hue, has equally proportioned limbs and a green colour.

Milton's "Paradise Lost" portrays how Satan tried to usurp the throne of God and become the master of heaven and earth and all creation. This is similar to the ten-headed Ravana trying to usurp the power of Rama by foul means. This is a question of fight between good and evil. In the midst of evil, good prevails. There is an internecine duel between the forces of darkness and light from within and without. Ultimately Satan is defeated.

One might ask: why does the Lord manifest Himself in the world of matter? The answer is that He does so at His own sweet will. As a matter of fact, there is no desire at all in God. It is the desire of His devotees that kindles grace in His heart and accordingly He manifests Himself in our midst. The truth, of-course, is that He is birthless and actionless, because He has no merit or demerit attaching to Him. The Jiva or the individual soul gets embodied under compulsion due to the effects of its past actions and not only reaps what it has previously sown but performs new actions, under the promptings of the accumulated stock of its past Karma that has not yet borne fruit, as well as under the influence of the new surroundings in which it is placed. God does not take birth in the above manner because He is absolutely free from the effects of His actions, and does not assume a body in order to reap the fruit of His past actions; and since His actions are purely impersonal they do not bear fruit. He manifests Himself simply to flood the creatures with His grace.

No one can explain the reality of God, which is beyond the reach of speech, mind, intellect and all other faculties. But in order to grasp this truth even partially it will be conducive to our good to discuss this subject just by way of an enquiry about God.

Brahmas, Vishnus and Sankaras who are part manifestations of Sri Rama who is considered as supreme Brahman,cannot protect their enemies. How can they do so? An enemy of the Supreme Brahma is virtually an enemy of these three deities themselves; for these latter are absolutely identical with Him. And viewed in the light of the difference in their Lila, the supreme Brahma is the whole and they are His parts, how can the parts afford shelter to an enemy of the whole? Hence, it is said, "Sankara, Vishnu and Brahma, in their thousands are unable to protect you, an enemy of Sri Rama."..

For the sake of His devotees, the divine Lord Sri Rama took the form of an earthly king and performed most sacred deeds, befitting an ordinary mortal, even as an actor, while acting on the stage, assumes various guises and exhibits different characters, but himself remains the same.

रामं कामारिसेव्यं भवभयहरणं कालमत्तेभसिंहम् ।
योगीन्द्रं ज्ञानगम्यं गुणनिधिमजितं निर्गुणं निर्विकारम् ॥

मायातीतं सुरेशं खलवधनिरतं ब्रह्मवृन्दैकदेवं ।
वन्दे कन्दावदातं सरसिजनयनं देवमुर्वीशरूपम् ।।

I adore Sri Rama the supreme Deity, the object of worship even of Siva, the dispeller of the fear of rebirth, the lion to quell the mad elephant in the form of Death,the Master of Yogis, attainable through immediate knowledge,the storehouse of good qualities, unconquerable, attributeless, immutable, beyond the realm of Maya, the Lord of celestials, intent on killing the evildoers, the only protector of the Brahmans, beautiful as a cloud laden with moisture, who has lotus-like eyes and appeared in the form of an earthly king.

—*Ramacharita Manasa Kalyana Kalpataru(Lanka Kanda)*

शङ्खचक्रगदः श्रीमान् पुण्डरीकायतेक्षणः ।
श्रीवत्सवक्षा नित्यश्रीः अजय्यः शाश्यतोध्रुवः
एकं भूतो महातेजा रामः कमललोचनः ।
सर्वलोकेश्वरः श्रीमान् रराज रघुनन्दनः ।।

—*27th Sarga, Sundarakanda,Ramayana. Valmiki,*

The lord with lotus eyes, bearing the conch-shell and the discus and who is having Srivatsa in his chest, who is permanent and shining, none other than Vishnu Raghunandana,Lord of the worlds, showed his form to Thrijadai(daughter of Vibhishana)in her dream. This emphasises the fact that Sri Rama is identical with an avatar of Vishnu.

Mythological aspect:

Reverting to the interpretation of the story ofSri Rama, Valmiki's is considered the oldest and most sacred. There is Adyathma Ramayana, Bhoja Champu, Tulsidas, Kambar etc. The mythological aspect of Rama's story is also discussed very often. All aspects have their own special significance.

In the same way, mythology has got its ulterior meaning reflected in the civilisation of the various ages. The world is emblematic. R. W. Emerson while speaking about language refers to the visible world(and the relation of its part) as the dial

plate of the invisible. The axioms of physics translate the laws of ethics. An enraged man is a lion, a cunning man is a fox, a firm man is a rock, a learned man is a torch. A lamb is innocence; a snake is subtle spite; flowers express to us the delicate affections.

Light and darkness are our familiar expressions for knowledge and ignorance; and heat for love. Visible distance behind and before us, is respectively our image of memory and hope. In like manner, the memorable words of history and the proverbs of nations consist usually of a natural fact, selected as a picture or parable of a moral truth. Thus, a rolling stone gathers no moss; a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; a cripple in the right way will beat a racer in the wrong; make hay while the sun shines; it's hard to carry a full cup even; Vinegar is the son of wine; the last ounce broke the camel's back; long-lived trees make roots first, and the like. Thus much regarding the meaning and the emblematic aspect of mythology.

Whatever little time we are able to spare in between our routine daily work it should be spent in the thought of God or in the utterance of His name. Bhoja Champu describes vividly the picture of Sriman Narayana as He appeared to the Devas. Those verses formed part of the Ramayana story composed by King Bhoja and Kalidasa at a time when King Bhoja was made aware of the fact that he had only ninety more minutes' life in this world. King Bhoja tricked Kalidasa into reciting the King's Charamasloka (elegy on the death of King Bhoja). Hearing that inspired poetry, King Bhoja who was then in disguise, fell down dead. At the entreaty of Kalidasa, the Divine Mother, enabled King Bhoja to live for another ninety minutes. King Bhoja when apprised of the situation did not feel sorry for his imminent death but decided to utilise the brief spell of life vouchsafed to him in singing the praise of the Lord. That was how the concise Ramayana, containing the verses quoted by him, came to be composed. The moral is that we should employ even the few minutes of leisure we may snatch in between jobs, in the thought of God or in reciting His name. The milky white ocean and the white Adisesha provided the necessary relief or background to the scintillating dark-blue body of Narayana. The very act of His slumber was described as active vigil in the protection of all the worlds. In the midst of the works of thy calling, retire to God in small prayers and ejaculations. In the morning accus-

Monothe...

tom yourself to think of God and at night let Him close thine eyes.

Sri Mahalakshmi:

As for Mahalakshmi she is generally worshipped together with her consort. When she is worshipped alone, her devotees exalt her to the position of the energy of the Supreme Being. Lakshmi is represented as sitting at the feet of Vishnu in his repose on the snake Ananta, or as flying with him on his Vahan Garuda. Alone, she is pictured as standing on a lotus, her symbol.

कान्तस्ते पुरुषोत्तमः फणिपतिः शय्याऽऽसनं वाहनं
बेदात्मा विहगेश्वरो यवनिका माया जगन्मोहिनी ।
ब्रह्मेशादिसुरव्रजः सदयितस्त्वद्दासदासीजनः
श्रीरित्येव च नाम ते भगवति ब्रूमः कथं त्वां वयम् ॥

O Goddess, the supreme person is your Beloved; Adisesha is your couch and throne; Garuda, who forms the self of the Vedas is your vehicle; Maya which deludes the universe is your veil; the hosts of gods with their beloved ones are your attendants and maids. Your name verily is ' Sri.' How can we praise you?

शान्तानन्तमहाविभूति परमं यद्ब्रह्म रूपं हरेः
मूर्तं ब्रह्म ततोऽपि तत्प्रियतरं रूपं यदत्यद्भुतम् ।
यान्यन्यानि यथासुखं विहरतो रूपाणि सर्वाणि ता-
न्याहुः स्वैरनुरूपरूपविभवैः गाढोपगूढानि ते ॥

The *absolute form* of Vishnu which is immutable, infinite and most powerful; *the defined form* of His which is most wonderful and dearer than the other; and also the *other forms* which He assumes at His own will for His sports these, they say, are closely united with your transcendental forms and avatars which are ever suitable to His own.

Sri Suka tells us the benefits that accrue from worshipping Sree Lakshmi:

" From Thy (Lakshmi's) propitious gaze men obtain wives, children, dwellings, friends, harvests and wealth. Health, strength,

power, victory, happiness are easy of attainment to those upon whom thou smilest. Thou art the mother of all beings, as the God of gods, Hari is their father; and this world, whether animate or inanimate is pervaded by Thee and Vishnu."

तां म आवह जातवेदो लक्ष्मीमनपगामिनीम् ।
यस्यां हिरण्यं विन्देयं गामश्वं पुरुषानहम् ।।

Sri, the bride of Vishnu, the mother of the world is eternal, imperishable; in like manner as He is all-pervading, so also is He omnipresent. Vishnu is meaning, she is speech. Hari is purity, she is prudence.

गन्धद्वारां दुराधर्षां नित्यपुष्टां करीषिणीम् ।
ईश्वरीं सर्वभूतानां तामिहोपह्वये श्रियम् ।।

I invoke Sri, to realise whom fragrant things (like sandal-paste flowers, etc.,) are the means, who is unassailable by the inauspicious, who is ever-joyful and the possessor of wealth, (in the form of manure because of the abundance of cattle She has) and who is the Supreme sovereign of all (living) beings.

Origin of Mahalakshmi:

When the Immortals and the Danavas were all pleased, with great force they began to churn the ocean. From the ocean there arose Surabhi, Uchchaisrava, Airavata, eight elephants of quarters Airavana and others, eight she-elephants and others, Kaustabha, Parijata, Apsaras and thereupon arose the very Sree, the most exalted divine Rama, adorning all the quarters with personal grace as does the lightning. Having their minds agitated by her beauty, grace, youthfulness, colour and effulgence, all the celestials and Asuras cherished a desire for her. Mahendra brought a wondrous seat for her and all the sacred rivers brought pure water in golden jars. The earth, worthy of being sprinkled, brought all the Oshadhis; the cows brought fruits and flowers born in the months of Chaitra and Vaishaka. Then the Rishis laid down according to Shastras the proper rites for ablution, the Gandharvas began to pour mellifluous notes and the dancing girls began to dance. Then the clouds began to put forth the

sounds of Mridanga, Panava, Muraja, Anaka, Gomukha and other musical instruments and blew conches, Veena and Flutes.

नूनं तपो यस्य न मन्युनिर्जयो ज्ञानं क्वचित् तच्च न सङ्गवर्जितम् ।
कश्चिन्महांस्तस्य न कामनिर्जयः स ईश्वरः किं परतोव्यपाश्रयः ।।

धर्मः क्वचित् तत्र न भूतसौहृदं त्यागः क्वचित् तत्र न मुक्तिकारणम् ।
वीर्यं न पुंसोऽस्त्यज वेगनिष्कृतं न हि द्वितीयो गुणसङ्गवर्जितः ।।

क्वचिच्चिरायुर्न हि शीलमङ्गलं क्वचित् तदप्यस्ति न वेद्यमायुषः ।
यत्रोभयं कुत्र च सोऽप्यमङ्गल सुमङ्गलः कश्च न काङ्क्षते हि माम् ।।

एवं विमृश्याव्यभिचारिसद्गुणैं वरं निजैकाश्रयतद्गुणाश्रयम् ।
वव्रे वरं सर्वगुणैरपेक्षितं रमा मुकुन्दं निरपेक्षमीप्सितम् ।।

Bhagavatham.

" Forsooth one, having asceticism, has not been able to conquer anger, one having knowledge has not the disassociation; some are great but have not been able to conquer desire; is he god who depends upon others? Some have got piety, but not compassion for creatures, some have got renunciation but not for salvation, some have prowess but not tried by time; devoid of all qualities (though) they are not my equal. Some live for ever but have not got an auspicious character; some,have got the latter but the permanency of their life is hard of being known; there is one (Siva) in whom both of these are found and who has no blemishes but He is inauspiciousness (himself) but there is one who is perfectly auspiciousness but does not want me." Judging Ramaa thus elected Mukunda (as her Lord)she is greatly adorned with fidelity and many other virtues, endowed with impartiality, untouched by three qualities, gifted with all accomplishments. who is satisfied with himself, and still wishes for Anima, etc,, she placed round his neck, the beautiful lotus garland that was in her hands and was sounded with the hum of the maddened bees; and then silently stood near, indicating by her bashful smiles that she has obtained her own place. Then the father of the three worlds made his own breast the habitation of the mother Sree gifted with great effulgence; Shree, too, with compassionate smiles, began to nourish her own subjects and the three worlds along with the protectors thereof; the followers of the celestials along with their wives began to sing and dance and play on the diverse musical

instruments such as Conch, Drum and Mridanga. Showering flowers and uttering Mantras that were dedicated to him the patriarchs headed by Brahma, Rudra, Angiras and others began to chant his glories; and being looked upon by Shree, the celestials and other creatures along with patriarchs were gifted with good character and other accomplishments and being disregarded by Lakshmi the avaricious Daitya and Danavas were divested of their energy and sprightliness.

DURGA

प्रपद्ये शरणं देवीं त्वांदुर्गे दुरितं हर ।
तां दुर्गां दुर्गमां देवीं दुराचारविघातिनीम् ।
नमामि भवभीतोऽहं संसारार्णवतारिणीम् ।।

Devuypanishad.

अर्चिष्यन्ति मनुष्यास्त्वां सर्वकामवरेश्वरीम् ।
नामधेयानि कुर्वन्ति स्थानानि च नरा भुवि ।
दुर्गेति भद्रकालीति विजया वैष्णवीति च ।।
कुमुदा चण्डिका कृष्णा माधवी कन्यकेति च ।
माया नारायणीशानी शारदेत्यम्बिकेति च ।।

Bhagavathamu

Durga, the Supreme Goddess, born of the womb of Yasoda, and fond of the boons bestowed on her by Narayana, sprung from the race of the cowherd Nanda, and the giver of prosperity, the enhancer (of the glory) of (a worshipper's) family, the terrifier of Kamsa, and the destroyer of Asuras.

Durga is represented in art as a woman of gentle countenance with ten arms in each of which she holds a weapon. With one foot she presses on the body of Mahisha and the other rests on her Vahana, the lion, which is depicted as lacerating the body of Mahisha. She wears a crown on her head and her clothes are magnificently jewelled.

The most formidable aspect of the consort of Shiva is Kali, who, it is said, destroyed Kal, Time itself. Kali is widely worshipped in India as the goddess of terror and the people of the lower classes are particularly devoted to her. Most of the dances, dark

rites and ceremonials practised in India by the lower orders can be traced to her. She is the goddess of epidemics and cataclysms. Kali is propitiated by sacrifices of animals and birds.

Her face is beautiful as that of Sankarshana! She has two large arms, long as a couple of poles raised in honour of India! In her six other arms she carries a vessel, a lotus, a bell, a noose, a bow, a large discus, and various other weapons! She is decked with a pair of well-made earrings graced with excellence! O Goddess, thou shinest with a face that challengeth the moon in beauty! With an excellent diadem and beautiful braid, with robes made of the bodies of snakes, and with also the brilliant girdle round thy hips, thou shinest like the Mandhara mountain encircled with snakes! Thou shinest also with peacock-plumes standing erect on thy head, and thou hast sanctified the celestial regions by adopting the vow of perpetual maiden-hood!

She slew the Buffalo Asura and she is praised and worshipped by the gods for the protection of the three worlds, the Asura who had conquered the celestial kingdom and driven out the gods from there. Durga appeared before the gods as a female of celestial beauty with ten arms into which the gods delivered their weapons, the emblem of their powers. On this occasion she received from Vishnu the discus; from Shiva, the trident; from Varuna the conch or shell; from Agni a flaming dart; from Vayu a bow; from Surya a quiver and arrow; from Yama an iron rod; from Brahma a bared-roll; from Indra a thunderbolt; from Kubera, a club; from Viswakarma a battle-axe; from Samudra, precious stones and offensive weapons; from the milky ocean a necklace of pearls; from Mount Himalayas a lion for a charger, and from Ananta, a wreath of snakes. Armed with these terrible weapons she proceeded to the Vindhya mountains. Here Mahisha happened to see her and tried to capture her. But Durga, at the end of a fierce combat, during which the demon transformed himself into various shapes, pierced him with a spear and killed him.

O thou foremost of all deities! Extend to me thy grace, show me thy mercy and be thou the source of blessing to me! You give fame, prosperity, steadiness, off-spring, art, knowledge, intellect, two twilights, night, sleep, light—both Solar and Lunar, beauty, forgiveness, mercy and every other thing.

Man's fetters, ignorance and loss of wealth, disease, and fear she dispels, worshipped by her devotees.

Durga in Ramayana.

Durga is worshipped in Spring. In one version of Ramayana Yuddha Kanda it is said that Rama was advised by Brahma that he must worship goddess Durga to destroy Ravana. Accordingly, Rama bathed in the ocean; cleansed and cooled and made all preparations with the help of the monkeys, who hastened to supply flowers and fruits for the ritual. He made a clay image of Durga and invoking her, prayed that she might be pleased to appear and accept his offerings. Both Rama and Lakshmana begged of the goddess to extend her grace.

With unfaltering faith, the brothers prayed for three days and so fervent were their prayers, Durga was moved to compassion. She came and regarded them with favour, but remained unseen.

Rama was very sad since the goddess could not be seen. " Listen Lord " said Vibhishana, "to win her blessing you must make an offering of one hundred and eight blue lotus flowers. They are rare and beautiful and almost unattainable even by the gods."

Rama remained deep in prayer while Hanuman who was entrusted with the job of bringing the flowers, swift as the wind made his journey. He soon returned with the blue flowers from the Devi Lake and counting them he gave Rama one hundred and eight blossoms.

Rama's joy knew no bounds when he saw the beautiful lotus flowers. He dedicated them all to the goddess. One by one he offered each flower with his prayers....after offering one hundred and six he found there was but one left! One hundred and eight had been delivered, where was the last one?

Rama in amazement, turned to pray again.

O "goddess," he wept, " I am faint and weary..sorrow has been by portion since birth. Much have you made me bear, O Mother. My kingdom was taken away... I came to the forests

and still you have no mercy.... Ravana robbed me of my Sita, aided by the monkeys I bridged the ocean to rescue her....I have slain many Rakshasas and only Ravana remains. Long have I prayed and worshipped but your favour is still denied."

"Lord, why lament? All your work shall be done by me," said Hanuman. "I shall slay Ravana and rescue the Lady Sita".

Rama would not be comforted, "All has been in vain. I vowed one hundred and eight lotus flowers and still lack one more to make the full number. No other lotus can be had to fulfil my vow. Lakshmana, what can I do now?..I am told my eyes resemble lotus flowers....to keep my word I shall pluck out one and offer it to the goddess." Saying this, Rama picked an arrow from his quiver. With a hymn of praise to Durga, he was about to pierce his eye when the goddess in compassion held his arm.

"What are you doing?" she cried appearing before him. "Your vow has been fulfilled. There is no need to give your eye."

The gods were still uneasy. The crafty Ravana had captured and imprisoned the celestial priest Brihaspati who was daily made to recite the Chandi. By this he hoped to win the favour of Durga, the goddess of fortune and victory. Chandi is a sacred book containing the Deeds of Durga.

At Rama's command the brave Hanuman turned himself into a fly and flew to where Brihaspathi, the captive was busy with his daily recital. Casting away the form of a fly, he became his huge self again. Brihaspathi was so terrified to see this gigantic threatening figure that he did, what he ought not to have done; he stopped reciting the Chandi, and thus the pollution started.

Durga is worshipped by orthodox people by the following stanza in Mahanarayanopanished, called Durga Sukta:

तामग्निवर्णां तपसा ज्वलन्तीं वैरोचनीं कर्म फलेषु जुष्टाम् ।
दुर्गां देवीं शरणमहं प्रपद्ये सुतरसितरसे नमः ।।

Again I worship the shining Durga and Pray to her to enable me to cross the ocean of life.

Worship of Lord Surya.

Worship of Surya, the Lord of the Solar system, is a recognised form of worship in Hindu scriptures. If a person sees the infra-red rays of the morning and evening sun his eyes improve. Sun's light has its effect on the human eye. Light is one of the chief ingredients of life in this planet and in the Solar system. The power behind the Sun's light and heat is the supreme power.

The worship of the sun is very ancient and some scholars hold the view that all religions had their origin in sun-worship. Vedic Aryans loved the brighter side of life and hence the Sun was an important object of worship. In some hymns of the Rig Veda he is mentioned as the only God. The character and greatness of the sun is described in Sandhya.

आसत्येन रजसा वर्तमानो निवेशयन्नमृतं मर्त्यं च ।
हिरण्ययेन सविता रथेनाऽऽदेवो याति भुवना विपश्यन् ॥

उद्वयं तमसस्परि पश्यन्तो ज्योतिरुत्तमम् । देवं देवत्रा सूर्यमगन्म
ज्योतिरुत्तमम् । उदित्यं जातवेदसं देवं वहन्ति केतवः । दृशे विश्वाय सूर्यं
चित्रं देवाना - मुदगा दनीकं चक्षुर्मित्रस्य वरुणस्याग्नेः आ प्रा द्यावा पृथिवी
अन्तरिक्षँसूर्यं आत्मा जगतस्तस्थुषश्च । तच्चक्षु - र्देवहितं पुरस्ताच्छुक्रमुच्चरत् ॥

The celestial Sun goes round his orbit witnessing the mortals and immortals do their duty. The shining sun who protects the immortals, dazzles our eyes and fills us with awe and admiration. He can be said to represent the eyes of Mitra, Varuna and Agni. He pervades over Devaloka, Bhuloka and Anthariksha. Let us meditate for hundred years the Suryamandala which does good to the Devathas.

As said in the 107th Sarga of Yuddha Kanda in Ramayana (Aditya Hridaya):

राम राम महाबाहो श्रुणु गुह्यं सनातनम् ।
येन सर्वानरीन्वत्स समरे विजयिष्यसि ॥

आदित्यहृदयं पुण्यं सर्वशत्रुविनाशनम् ।
जयावहं जपेन्नित्यमक्षय्यं परमं शिवम् ॥

रश्मिमन्तं समुद्यन्तं देवासुरनमस्कृतम् ।
पूजयस्व विवस्वन्तं भास्करं भुवनेश्वरम् ॥
सर्वदेवात्मको ह्येष तेजस्वी रश्मिभावनः ।
एष देवासुरगणांल्लोकान्पाति गभस्तिभिः ॥
एष ब्रह्माच विष्णुश्च शिवः स्कन्दः प्रजापतिः ।
महेन्द्रो धनदः कालो यमः सोमो ह्यपांपतिः ।

"Rama, Rama, O! mighty-armed one, hearken to the eternal secret, whereby, my child, thou wilt conquer all foes in fight. Aditya-hridaya is sacred, capable of destroying all foes, bringing victory- The recitation is enduring and indestructible, and supremely good, fraught with all welfare, removing every sin, chasing away anxiety and grief, bringing length of days and excellence. Do thou worship Viwaswata's offspring the Sun-lord of the world, furnished with rays, who maketh people engage in work, and who is bowed down to by deities and Asuras. This effulgent one, producing rays is instinct with the spirits of all the deities; and he with his rays rules all creatures and the hosts of celestials and Asuras. This Sun is Brahma and Vishnu and Siva and Skanda and Prajapati, and Mahendra and Dhanada and the Destroyer Yama and Soma and the Lord of waters."

In the Puranas, the Sun is spoken of as an Aditya (son of Kasyapa and Aditi). The Adityas are twelve: Dhatri, Aryamat, Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Vivaswat, Pushan, Parjanya, Anshu, Bhaga, Twashtri and Vishnu. Of these Vishnu is considered the foremost and is in some accounts, identified with the Sun. Others maintain that the Adityas are different names of the sun indicative of his differing appearance in the twelve months.

The Gayatri, the most important Mantra of the Vedas, is addressed to the sun. The nature and power of the Gayatri are thus described: "Nothing in the 'Vedas' is superior to the Gayatri. No invocation is equal to the Gayatri, as no city is equal to Kasi (Banares). The Gayatri is the mother of the Vedas and of Brahmins. By repeating it a man is saved. By the power of the Gayatri the Kshatriya Viswamitra became a Brahmarshi (Brahmin saint) and even nearly obtained such powers as to be able to create a new world.

The orthodox division of worshippers fall into six classes. *i.e.*, (1) Vaishnavas (2) Shaivas (3) Shaktas, (4) Ganapatyas (5)

Monothe...

Saurapatas (those who worship Surya) and (6) Kumaran Subramaniya. Thus it is clear that worship of Surya is recognised and orthodox.

Even the substitute fruits, vegetables and animals had to thrive only under the solar system. When Brahma repeatedly refused to recognise Viswamitra a Brahmin, Viswamitra in defiance of Brahma started creating a new world by the accumulated power of his austerities. He made the coconut tree from the fruit of which he intended to make men's heads; instead of the Rohita tree, he made the first Mrigala; instead of the goat made by Brahma he made the long-eared goat; instead of the sheep created by Brahma, he made the Dumba; instead of the cold-season rice he made the wet season ride; instead of the legumes made by Brahma, he made those which grow in the wet season. Brahma became alarmed at the success of Viswamitra's attempt and went to him in the form of a Brahmin and asked for a boon. Viswamitra promised to grant him any boon desired of him and the Brahmin requested him to stop creating.

The mystic monosyllable ' AUM ' is also traced to the Sun. It represents the Trinity. The first letter stands for the creator, the second for the preserver and the third for the destroyer. It is written inside a circle representing the orb of the sun, and its representations are often worn by the Hindus as lockets. In the Chandogya Upanishad 'AUM' is thus described: "The essence of all beings is the earth, the essence of the earth is water,the essence of water the plants, the essence ofplants man, the essence of man speech, the essence of speech the Rig Veda, the essence of Rig Veda is the Sama Veda, the essence of the Sama Veda the Udgitha which is "AUM."

In the Mandukyopanished it is said:

हरिः ओम्। ओमित्येतदक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानं भूतं भवद्भविष्यदिति सर्वमोंकार एव। यच्चान्यत्त्रिकालातीतं तदप्योंकार एव ॥

Harih Aum. Aum, the word, is all this A clear explanation of it is: All that is past, present and future is verily Aum. That which is beyond the triple conception of time, is also truly Aum.

सर्वं ह्येतद्ब्रह्मायमात्मा ब्रह्म सोऽयमात्मा चतुष्पात् ॥

All this is verily Brahman. This Atman is Brahman. This Atman has four quarters.

एष सर्वेश्वर एष सर्वज्ञ एषोऽन्तर्याम्येष योनिः ।
सर्वस्य प्रभवाप्ययौ हि भूतानाम् ॥

This is the Lord of all; this is the knower of all; this is the controller within; this is the source of all; and this is that from which all things originate and in which they finally disappear.

The person that is in the right eye is known as "Indha-the Luminous One " (Brhd. Up'). Indha, which means the effulgent one, who is the Vaiswanara and also known as the Virat Atman (the totality of gross bodies), the perceiver in the sun, is the same as the perceiver in the eye. This is the indentification of the sun, which means who perceives all.

Six different conceptions of Brahma, taught by different teachers. are referred to, in the Brahadaranyaka Upanishad. First, that Brahma is speech. This was self-evident, replied Yajnavalkya who then supplemented by adding that its seat was speech, its support space, and it should be reverenced as intelligence, for by speech all things were known. Similarly, the theory that Brahma was breath was approved as true, but supplemented by the explanation that breath was its seat, space its support, and it should be reverenced as dear, since the breath of life is dear. So Brahma is sight, the eye its seat, space its support, and it should be reverence as dear, since the breath of life is dear. So Brahma is sight, the eye truthfulness, since the eyes see truly. Brahma is hearing, the ear its seat, space its support; and it should be reverenced as the endless for the quarters of heaven from which one hears are endless. Brahma is mind, its seat is mind, its support is spaces and it should be reverenced as the blissful, for with the mind one experiences bliss. Brahma is the heart, its seat is the heart, it, support is space and it should be reverenced as the steadfast, for the heart is a steadfast support.

Sri Anjaneya.

Everything that lives and grows is connected with the immense universe in which human beings form an insignificant part of a

and birds occupy a place of importance as human beings. In Valmiki Ramayana some animals and birds are deified. The similarity between the man and the ape is stressed in the story of Ramayana. The animals that aided Rama were monkeys and bears. It is said that the monkeys were the sons of Gods, born for the express purpose of helping Sri Rama. Hanuman was the most powerful of the Monkey-chiefs. His loyalty to Rama has become proverbial.

यत्र यत्र रघुनाथकीर्तनं तत्र तत्र कृतमस्तकाञ्जलिम् ।
बाष्पवारिपरिपूर्णलोचनं मारुतिं नमत राक्षसान्तकम् ॥

Hanuman was born of an Apsara, called Anjana Devi, and therefore called Anjaneya. His father is Wind God. As soon as he was born he saw the rising sun which he mistook for a fruit, and leapt into the sky to catch it. The terrified luminary, the Sun, took to fight. Hanuman chased him. Indra who saw this hurled a thunderbolt on Hanuman which wounded him in the jaw and he felled him to the earth. When Wind God threatened to take vengeance on Indra, for having thrown Hanuman his son, Indra apologised and granted Hanuman the boon of immortality.

Hanuman was specially selected to search for Sita by the Monkey-Chief, Sugriva. Coming to know that Sita had been carried away by Ravana, he climbed to the top of the Mountain Mahendra and started coursing through the sky, towards Lanka. He came across Samudra Raja on the way. The latter asked him to relax himself on the hill which he raised from the Ocean, before proceeding further. Hanuman started afresh, towards Lanka. A Rakshasi named Surasa opened her mouth to swallow him. Her mouth was fabulously big. Hanuman suddenly contracted himself to the size of a thumb, entered her mouth, assumed his vast form and came out of her right-ear leaving her as a carcass that fell into the sea. This incident is described in the first Sarga of Sundarakanda of Valmiki Ramayana. Also, another Rakshasi called Simhika tried to eclipse Hanuman by controlling his shadow while he was coursing through the Sky. But, Hanuman proved too powerful for her. In this chapter, Valmiki wants to emphasize that Hanuman had the godly qualities of strength, valour, bravery and determination. Those who desire strength, physical and mental, worship Hanuman. In Bhagavatam, Durga, the sister of Lord

Krishna is described as a deity who is the sole refuge of men who are attacked by robbers or while afflicted in crossing streams, afflicted with fear. It is the Goddess who confers the boon of strength and also blesses people with offsprings and wealth. In Ramayana, Hanuman is described as the God who confers strength and ensures protection for worshippers of Rama. He is also a protector of those devotees who devote themselves to the study of Ramayana. He is the ideal of perfect servant who finds full realisation of manhood, faithfulness and obedience. Humility is his predominating quality.

In the Mahabharata, there is an interesting account of a meeting between Hanuman and his half-brother Bhima. (Bhima was born of Kunti by the power of Pavana, the wind-god). After Rama's death, Hanuman was living in a mountain fastness spending his days in contemplation of his great master. Bhima in his search for a mythical flower that Draupadi wished to possess, happened to pass the forest and saw an old monkey sleeping across his path. He asked the monkey to get out of his way. The monkey wished to know who he was. Bhima's account was one of self-glorification and praise of the Pandava heroes. Bhima happened to wander in the forests without a kingdom and faced insult from Duryodhana Bhima asked the monkey to clear the road. The monkey said that he was ailing and requested Bhima to step across him. But Bhima would not do this, because, he said, of his respect for his brother Hanuman who was a monkey. Nor would he pass him by the head side. After some argument Bhima agreed to pass by the tailside, but Hanuman's tail became longer. When Bhima tried to lift it he failed in the attempt. After walking along the tail for about a league Bhima decided to lift it up with his club, which weapon, however, broke in the attempt.

Now the Pandava knew he was dealing with no ordinary ape and he came back to Hanuman and asked him respectfully who he was. Hanuman smiled and disclosed his identity. He entertained Bhima with many tales of ancient days, and described to him the feats performed by the monkeys in the Ramayana battle. Bhima requested Hanuman to show him the form he had assumed for jumping over to Lanka. Hanuman now stood up and began to increase in size, but before he reached his full stature, Bhima got frightened of the enormity of the form, fainted and fell down.

There are no tricks in plain and simple faith.

Swami Vivekananda said in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago " of all the forces that have been working and are still working to mould destinies of the human race none, certainly, is more potent than the manifestation of which we call Religion." Edmund Burke used to say—Religion is the basis of all society, source of all good and of all comfort. Monotonous will be the world in which all people had the same faith and the same customs. God expresses himself in many ways. There are various shades and grades of emotion and devotion among human beings. Hence there came into the world through God and God-like men such religions as Christianity, Mahomadanism,Zoarastranism, Buddhism and so on. The forms of religion differ; but the essence of all the religions is the same. All religions take you to the same goal. The cardinal principle of Hinduism is that all people should live in comfort and peace and equality.

The Vedas are the most ancient scriptures of the Hindus· There are said to be 7 crores of Manthras of which Gayathri is the most essential. Vedas include Vedanta comprising 108 Upanishads or 120 Upanishads which are mostly prose-treatises attached to the Vedas. The first Upanishad, Ishavashya Upanishad is inspiring.

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मागृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥

What little we have got we should renounce and enjoy. Do not covet the wealth of another man. Among the first 10 Upanishads which give wisdom, the Mandukya Upanishad approaches truths directly and it defines salvation and God as things which cannot be seen, cannot be argued, constant, peaceful, powerful; considered to have 4 dimensions. The various Upanishads expound various truths. It is not possible to expound further on the Upanishads in the present context with the little time and space.

Then comes Purana and Ithihasa. Ithihasa is generally resorted to by many people because it is accessible to all people.. For

तत्सवितुर्वरेणियं ७
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ८
धीयो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ८

The Gayathri Manthra is called गायत्री because it is in the Gayathri Metre. The Gayathri metre consists of 8 letters in each of the padas and there are only three padas for the Gayathri. When there are four padas of 8 letters each, it is called अनुष्टुप्.

But the Gayathri does not contain 8 letters in all the three padas. The first pada has only 7 letters and the rest 8 letters. So it is called नृचत्गायत्री *i.e.*, Gayathri which is less one syllable.

The sage is Visvamitra and the Devata is सवितृ. The metre is नृचत्गायत्री ।

This is a hymn devoted to the deity of the cause of creations as shining in the midst of the disc of the Sun. The meaning is this:—

" May that one supreme ray of divine Savita, we pray, shine into us and propel all the latentand docile faculties in us to fruition."

With regard to its prayer there are different views. There is Arghya, Japa and Homa. Authorities in Manthra Shastra say that during the Arghya we have to recite the first pada with the 7 syllables. During Japa we have to split वरेण्यम् as वरेणियं so that it may develop into 8 syllables. During Homa it is said that वरेण्यं should be pronounced as वरेणियोम्. The authority with regard to it is only Manthra Shastra and Prayoga.

The Gayathri is employed to dispel darkness and establish light. Darkness and light can be interpreted as Asuras and Devas and so this manthra is employed for the expulsion of any evil force affecting a man and his house. This is known as Gayathri Home where after kindling the Holy Fire, Gayathri Devata with all its powers and potentialities is invoked and settled in the Fire. Then the Manthra is recited and then the Kamya Vishaya is recited and finally स्वाहा.

This Manthra forms the basic Manthra in the तिलहोमं which is performed for the annihilation of पितृशाप if any. We have the astrological sanction behind it and if the Homa is performed

repeating it 24,000 times, the Pitrus become satisfied. Here the materials are समित्, अन्न and आज्यं and medicinal herbs.

The same may be performed without any काम with पलाश and then the result is nothing but physical splendour, and spiritual evolution. ब्रह्म वर्चस् The same is the case with सुदर्शन Homa also. If it is performed with काम it will expel all evil forces and possessions and if performed without any definite will,then it will develop the mind and brain and give us self-reliance. Ambarisha got the Sudarsana into his body only through the recitation of the Sudarsana Manthra. It protects us from enemies as it did in the case of Durvasa.

All Manthras can be used and employed. One can use them for himself and employ them for protection from enemies. But when once it is employed for protection, it becomes exhausted and if only used for self evolution. It is conserved and gives us Siddhi of various kinds. For example take ब्रह्मदण्ड of Vasishta. He had all the conservation of energy in him and when he employed it to counter-act the arrows andmissiles of Visvamithra he became completely exhausted of its possession. So soon after an employment, the employer should again store the same in him after a long Tapasya with discipline for the prescribed period.

It is said in the Sandilya Upanishad, sixty first among the 108 Upanishads,that if a person says his prayers loudly and recites these Manthras he produces the routine effect. The Gayathri Japam if performed with a muttering sound, the effect is 1,000 fold. If the person properly meditates, the benefit increases million fold. In the daily prayers and Sandhya, even if some rituals and Manthras have to be left out due to wantof time or rush of work, Gayathri Manthram should not be left out. The sages were so wise that they have made it easy for human beings to meditate on the Manthram which is short but full of essence.

बले अतिबले Manthram taught by Visvamithra to Sri Rama and Sri Lakshmana are adaptations from Gayathri and are found in Savitri Upanishad.

Curiously Visvamithra happens to be the Rishi for Gayathri and also the Rishi who taught these Mantras (बले अतिबले) to Sri Rama and Sri Lakshmana and therefore it is evidentt that these Manthras originate from Gayathri.

There are no tricks in plain and simple faith.

Swami Vivekananda said in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago " of all the forces that have been working and are still working to mould destinies of the human race none, certainly, is more potent than the manifestation of which we call Religion." Edmund Burke used to say—Religion is the basis of all society, source of all good and of all comfort. Monotonous will be the world in which all people had the same faith and the same customs. God expresses himself in many ways. There are various shades and grades of emotion and devotion among human beings. Hence there came into the world through God and God-like men such religions as Christianity, Mahomadanism,Zoarastranism, Buddhism and so on. The forms of religion differ; but the essence of all the religions is the same. All religions take you to the same goal. The cardinal principle of Hinduism is that all people should live in comfort and peace and equality.

The Vedas are the most ancient scriptures of the Hindus· There are said to be 7 crores of Manthras of which Gayathri is the most essential. Vedas include Vedanta comprising 108 Upanishads or 120 Upanishads which are mostly prose-treatises attached to the Vedas. The first Upanishad, Ishavashya Upanishad is inspiring.

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ।।

What little we have got we should renounce and enjoy. Do not covet the wealth of another man. Among the first 10 Upanishads which give wisdom, the Mandukya Upanishad approaches truths directly and it defines salvation and God as things which cannot be seen, cannot be argued, constant, peaceful, powerful; considered to have 4 dimensions. The various Upanishads expound various truths. It is not possible to expound further on the Upanishads in the present context with the little time and space.

Then comes Purana and Ithihasa. Ithihasa is generally resorted to by many people because it is accessible to all people. For

instance, in Ramayana Sri Ramachandra gives assurance to Vibhishana—in the following sloka:

सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते ।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद्व्रतं मम ॥

There are also similar slokas in the 18th Chapter of the Gita in which Lord Krishna urges Arjuna to sacrifice and abandon all rites and duties and come to him. If this is done, Lord Krishna will save him from all sins and assure him of redemption.

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

There are inspiring passages in Gita pointing out that the purpose of Avatara of God is to rescue the righteous as well as to break the might of evil ones; to set aright the stream flow from age to age. Besides, whenever there is a decay of righteousness and exaltation of un-righteousness, in order to set right matters God comes in human Form.

One of the specialities in Hinduism is the Yoga system in which every individual understands himself and develops the inner-self. The Yoga System has 8 stages of development.

थम नियमासन प्राणायाम प्रत्याहार ध्यान धारणा समाधयोऽष्टांगानि

The first two deals with the purification of daily conduct, third deals with peaceful exercise, fourth deals with holding the breath, fifth deals with gathering together the mental force, sixth deals with meditation, seventh deals with meditation of a higher order and the eigth deals with man getting absorbed in God. This was practised as a regular system and during the present time the exponents of this system are very few. The wholeof Bhagavat Gita is devoted to the teaching of Yoga by Lord Krishna to Arjuna. Man of action should take to Karma Yoga. Man of Reason should take to Sankhya, Man of wisdom to Gnana Yoga, Man of emotion should resort to Bhakti Yoga and so on.

Better the discharge of one's own duty than the duty of another. Congenial duty ought to be performed though clouded by defects.

In the various scriptures, there are passages which inspire a man to lead a religious life. In the Christian literature, *i.e.*,

Imitation of Christ by Thomas A.Kempis—passage which inspired George Eliot—In heaven ought to be thy dwelling and all things should be looked upon as they forward their journey thither. All things pass away and thou together with them. Cleave not unto them. Lest thou get entangled and perish. Some of the beatitudes of the Bible are inspiring. Seek ye the kingdom of God and all things shall be added unto you; blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. It is more easy for a camel to break through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble. Blessed is the man who walketh not in the council of the un-Godly nor sitteth in the seat of sinners. Whatsoever thou askest in prayer believing, thou shall get. Prayer is the ascent of the mind towards God.

" Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away " says the Christian Scripture. If heaven passes away and earth passes away, what is the use of the fly-leaf of the book: but it simply means that what is said in the Bible dwells on eternal truths which are of value to mankind. It may be said of Jesus Christ, as was said of Shakespeare by Ben Johnson " Thou are not for an age, but for all time."

It is said that Omar Kayyum mentioned—"Burn all the books in the world for their essence is in the Quran." This does not mean that all the books other than Quran should be burnt. It means that Quran is comprehensive and contains rules of life, marriage, fasting, feasting, prayers, etc., and it is not necessary to read other books to lead a proper life.

The doctrines of the Muslim religion preach 5 prayers a day, frequent lustrations, alms-giving, fasting and more important of all, adopting universal brotherhood consistent with the doctrine " There is only one God and Mohammad is his Prophet."

As for the Buddhist,he is a firm believer in Ahimsa and correct actions, but he does not expatiate on the 5th element nor on the supreme deity.

The Parsee worships fire and recognises the right of all to pray or worship in their own way to Ahura Mazda.

As for the message of the East to the West is the true message; only by finding himself can man be saved, what shall it profit a man, though he gains the whole world if he loses his own soul as referred to by Sri Aurobindo. The fundamental difference between Asia and Europe has been that Asia has served pre-dominently as a field for man's spiritual experience and progressive Europe has been the workshop for his mental and vital activities. Man approaches nearer perfection by recognition of the material mould and mental conditions of human existence side by side with the spiritual aspect of human-life combining in himself the idealist and the pragmatist. Man's nature consists of five sheaths: Physical, Vital, Mental, Supramental and Spiritual. There is a lop-sided development in man if only physical, vital and mental forces are developed to the detriment of those supramental and spiritual energy. In the West there has been a lop-sided development of physical, vital and mental energies. In the east, there is a lop-sided development of supramental and spiritual energies. If man is not content whithin himself and develops ill-feelings in his dealings with others, the result is that a tendency towards war develops. If every individual develops the five aspects referred to, there will be no war. It is the purpose of Religion to seek and develop spirituality in man.

All Religions are threaded on a string of virtues just as pearls are threaded on a string. They are: right thought, right word, right deed, right exertion, right meditation, right remembrance and right means of livelihood. These virtues are taught by all religions. If one practises these virtues, he becomes pure. For illustration, we may take Newton's disc of colours *i.e.*, a disc painter violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red. If all these colours are painted on the disc and the disc rotated fast, no colour will be seen except white, which is a symbol of purity. Purity takes you to God. In the same way if all the virtues are practised it will lead man to purity which leads him to salvation. This is the sum and substance of all religions and all inspiring messages. Let all people live on a footing of equality and peace. Our civilisation preaches equality in God. Therefore we must leave other people to live on equal terms of liberty.

As said in the 17th chapter of Gita:

सत्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ।।

The faith of each is shaped according to his own nature. The man consists of his faith that which his faith is he is even that.

As A. N. Whitehead said, keynote of idolatry is contentment with the prevalent Gods.

The codes of all religions embody the particular temperaments and stages of civilisation of their adherents. No religion can be considered in abstraction from its followers. Religious ideas represent highly specialised forms of general notions.

" I hazard the prophecy that the religion will conquer which can render clear to popular understanding some eternal greatness incarnate in the passage of temporal fact."

The simple truths which are well known throughout the world are the same. The rituals and the outward forms should not distort the essential truths. If one exaggerates the importance of rituals and forms one cannot see wood for trees. It is necessary to understand that rituals lead the way to the essentials and they are not ends in themselves. The various thantras such as Vaikhanasa and Pancharatra etc., are necessary.

One has to co-ordinate in religion, the direct truths expressed in the Vedas with the exaggerated truths that are expressed in the Ithihasas and Puranas. Thanthras, rituals and sampradaya are propounded by Acharyas. Puranas represent a later stage of evolution than vedas. The Vedas conjoined with the teachings of the Acharyas containing the various thanthras, have to be coordinated and understood and practised according to one's own nature, inclination, religion etc.

God is the same to all worshippers. But different people try to approach Him by different paths.

As Robert Browning said in his poem, " Some men hate what I follow, shun what I believe."

" God and soul stand sure,
Potter and clay endure."

Celebration of festivals is an expression of Bhakti or Devotion.

The pageantry of Indian Festivals is a part of the life c masses. The outward grandeur of elephants bedecked with geous costumes in glorious multi-colours and chariot and pala: processions with religious idols are a reflection of the inward deur of the soul of man. It is said the inner government of is akin to the outward government of administration by The human government of man has got formalities in celebr state occasions pertaining to secular government. In a si manner in government, there are grand methods of celebr the inner government of God by means of outward symbols. festival occasions, at the present time,are now regarded as a pow instrument for propagation of ideas. All gigantic Comm Projects, which accentuated self-realisation by village commu in India, have given a fillip to fairs and festivals. A few of important festivals which are celebrated with great pomp show are Dasara, Diwali, Holi, Ramanavami, Upakarma, mashtami, Ganeshotsava and Durga Pooja.

Dasara and Durga Pooja:—Dasara and Durga Pooja for nine days. The tenth day, which is the final and the last of the celebrations is called Vijaya Dashmi or Dasara. On first day, the images of Goddess Durga are installed in hc and temples. Throughout India, Dasara is celebrated with g pomp, specially in Bengal. Goddess Durga is worshipped offerings of flowers, fruits and sweets. Dance recitals, sta of plays and singing of devotional songs are some of the feat of the celebration. On the tenth day, the assemblage of ima are dipped into a river. Each evening of Navaratri (day a is sacred to one of the manifestations of Durga and the God is worshipped in the form of an unmarried girl. The fifth of the worship is called Lalita Panchami.

During the nine days of Navaratri, the devotees of Devi eit fast or take only one meal a day. Those weak in health, v find it difficult to observe the fast for nine days, may fast for sev five or three days. Certain ceremonies are performed and chanti are done by priests. This is the occasion for feeding holy n and giving them clothes and cash.

Durga is the goddess of power or Shakti. It is believed that Rama, the hero of Ramayana, invoked the goddess Durga for supernatural aid in his campaign against Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. This period of festivities is called Dasara in the North, when Ram Lila performances, representing principal incidents of the Ramayana, are held every day. The Ram Lila ends with the defeat and death of Ravana, whose immense effigy is set fire to and blown up with fireworks at the conclusion of the performance.

In Mysore, colourful celebrations of Dasara have been continuing without a break ever since 1610 A.D.when the then ruler, instituted the observance of Dasara on a grand scale. The ceremony takes place in the vast throne room of the palace, where the Maharaja holds a ten day durbar. He wears gorgeous dresses in glorious golden and silver brocade each evening. These festivities attract large crowds from all parts of India. The whole palace is brilliantly lit up and troops go on parading adjacent to the durbar. The worship of the State Sword is an impressive ceremony on the ninth day of the festival. The Sword is placed in the palanquin drawn by decorated bullocks.

On the last day of Dasara, there is a grand procession with the Maharaja riding on profusely decorated elephant. The troops, palace guards and magnates go in a procession and return in a torchlight procession to the palace in the evening.

The fast of Navaratri is said to be observed in memory of a similar fast. Rama observed to propitiate Durga when he was fighting the battle of Lanka. On the eight day of Navaratri Rama killed Ravana. He performed a sacrifice as thanksgiving on the ninth day and on the tenth he started on his journey to Ayodhya, in memory of which Dasara is celebrated.

Dasara is considered to be an auspicious day for starting on military expeditions. Children in some parts of India begin their education on Vijaya Dasami Day.

It is said that when Yudhishtira was on his way to Virata, he began to praise mentally the supreme goddess, Durga, born of Yasoda and fond of the boons given by Sri Narayana. She

Celebration of festivals is an expression of Bhakti or Devotion.

The pageantry of Indian Festivals is a part of the life of our masses. The outward grandeur of elephants bedecked with gorgeous costumes in glorious multi-colours and chariot and palanquin processions with religious idols are a reflection of the inward grandeur of the soul of man. It is said the inner government of God is akin to the outward government of administration by man. The human government of man has got formalities in celebrating state occasions pertaining to secular government. In a similar manner in government, there are grand methods of celebrating the inner government of God by means of outward symbols. The festival occasions, at the present time,are now regarded as a powerful instrument for propagation of ideas. All gigantic Community Projects, which accentuated self-realisation by village communities in India, have given a fillip to fairs and festivals. A few of the important festivals which are celebrated with great pomp and show are Dasara, Diwali, Holi, Ramanavami, Upakarma, Janmashtami, Ganeshotsava and Durga Pooja.

Dasara and Durga Pooja:—Dasara and Durga Pooja lasts for nine days. The tenth day, which is the final and the last day of the celebrations is called Vijaya Dashmi or Dasara. On the first day, the images of Goddess Durga are installed in homes and temples. Throughout India, Dasara is celebrated with great pomp, specially in Bengal. Goddess Durga is worshipped with offerings of flowers, fruits and sweets. Dance recitals, staging of plays and singing of devotional songs are some of the features of the celebration. On the tenth day, the assemblage of images are dipped into a river. Each evening of Navaratri (day also) is sacred to one of the manifestations of Durga and the Goddess is worshipped in the form of an unmarried girl. The fifth day of the worship is called Lalita Panchami.

During the nine days of Navaratri, the devotees of Devi either fast or take only one meal a day. Those weak in health, who find it difficult to observe the fast for nine days, may fast for seven, five or three days. Certain ceremonies are performed and chantings are done by priests. This is the occasion for feeding holy men and giving them clothes and cash.

Durga is the goddess of power or Shakti. It is believed that Rama, the hero of Ramayana, invoked the goddess Durga for supernatural aid in his campaign against Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. This period of festivities is called Dasara in the North, when Ram Lila performances, representing principal incidents of the Ramayana, are held every day. The Ram Lila ends with the defeat and death of Ravana, whose immense effigy is set fire to and blown up with fireworks at the conclusion of the performance.

In Mysore, colourful celebrations of Dasara have been continuing without a break ever since 1610 A.D.when the then ruler, instituted the observance of Dasara on a grand scale. The ceremony takes place in the vast throne room of the palace, where the Maharaja holds a ten day durbar. He wears gorgeous dresses in glorious golden and silver brocade each evening. These festivities attract large crowds from all parts of India. The whole palace is brilliantly lit up and troops go on parading adjacent to the durbar. The worship of the State Sword is an impressive ceremony on the ninth day of the festival. The Sword is placed in the palanquin drawn by decorated bullocks.

On the last day of Dasara, there is a grand procession with the Maharaja riding on profusely decorated elephant. The troops, palace guards and magnates go in a procession and return in a torchlight procession to the palace in the evening.

The fast of Navaratri is said to be observed in memory of a similar fast. Rama observed to propitiate Durga when he was fighting the battle of Lanka. On the eight day of Navaratri Rama killed Ravana. He performed a sacrifice as thanksgiving on the ninth day and on the tenth he started on his journey to Ayodhya, in memory of which Dasara is celebrated.

Dasara is considered to be an auspicious day for starting on military expeditions. Children in some parts of India begin their education on Vijaya Dasami Day.

It is said that when Yudhishtira was on his way to Virata, he began to praise mentally the supreme goddess, Durga, born of Yasoda and fond of the boons given by Sri Narayana. She

ascended the skies when dashed by Kamsa on a stony platform, the sister of Vasudeva, she is decked in celestial garlands and attired in celestial robes armed with scimitar and shield. She rescues her worshippers; whoever prays to her in the hour of distress, she helps. It is said that Yudhishtira praised her as the giver of boons.

Divali: Divali falls usually in October or November and is a spectacle of extravagant display of multicoloured lights and fire-works. This is celebrated to commemorate the return of Lord Rama at Ayodhya, after his banishment lasting fourteen years. The blessings of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, are invoked. According to Jains, this festival commemorates the death anniversary of Lord Mahavir, the founder of Jainism, who discarded his physical body and attained 'Nirvana' on the Divali Day.

This is rather a cosmopolitan festival and even in the Muslim period of Indian History, Divali had continued to remain in vogue. Moghul historian, Abul Gazal of the Aine-Akbari fame mentions Divali as the greatest festival of the mercantile Community and it is said that Muslims also participated in this illumination.

Celebrations of Divali festival by Sikhs at Golden Temple, Amritsar, is another feature. The sikhs celebrate Divali to commemorate the return of Guru Hargovind, sixth Sikh Guru, at Amritsar after having been released by the Moghul Emperor Jehangir. But according to the orthodox traditions, the following view is held of Divali. This is the New Year Day of the Hindus, who follow the Vikram era. The festival falls in October-November. One legend about Divali is that king Vikramaditya was crowned on this day. Another version tells us that Bali was deprived of his kingdom by Maha Vishnu on this day. In Maharashtra, women prepare effigies of Bali either in rice-flour or cowdung and worship them and repeat the blessings. A third story is that Vishnu killed Narakasura on Divali day. The most popular belief, however, is that Rama, on his return from Lanka, was crowned on this day. We may take it that the most popular belief is that Divali was originaly celebrated in honour of Rama's coronation, and Vikramaditya selected this day as the most auspicious for his own coronation; hence the coincidence of the two important events.

Deepavali means 'cluster of lights.' In some parts of India, effigies of Narakasura or Ravana are made and burnt. Hindu merchants renew their account books, white-wash their offices and houses and begin a new life on the New Year Day. Sri Maha Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, is particularly worshipped for prosperity in the coming year. Presents are given to relatives, friends and subordinates. Even all other people, especially in South India, take oil bath and wear new clothes and visit temples and their relations. Children particularly look forward to this day as the "festival of fireworks and sweet-meats."

It is said that Shiva gambled with His wife on this day, lost everything and was driven in penury to the banks of the Ganges. Kartikeya seeing his father's plight, learnt the art of gambling, challenged his mother to a contest, won everything from her and restored his father to his former state of opulence. Sri Ganesha in turn, learnt the art of gambling and defeated his brother. There were some more reverses and domestic troubles, and reconciliation ultimately resulted, on account of which Siva considered this day as auspicious for gambling.

The Holi Festival:—This festival which falls in the month of March is celebrated lavishly in North India. The participants squirt coloured water and indiscriminately sprinkle brightly coloured powders on each other. The street crowds are not spared and even women and children are not exempted. This celebration symbolises the death of the Demoness Holika, the sister of King Hiranya Kasipu, the father of Prahlad. Hiranya Kasipu wanted Prahalad, a fervent adorer of Lord Narayana, to renounce his faith. But the boy refused to yield. According to tradition. Hirannya Kasipu, prevailed upon Holika, who possessed magic powers which made her immune from fire. She was asked to throw him into the flames but the flames died down and to the surprise of the king, Hiranya Kasipu, Holika was consumed to ashes and Prahlad was left alive and unhurt. It is sometimes described as a festival of thanksgiving for the winter harvest. Folk songs are sung in the evenings at the gatherings round huge bonfires. In Uttar Pradesh, the celebration is specially, interesting.

Ramanavami:—This festival falls on the 9th day of Chaitra and is celebrated as the birthday of Sri Rama. During the eight

nights preceding it, it is believed to be meritorious to listen to a recital of the Ramayana. For this purpose, Pandits well versed in sacred lore are asked to give Harikatha, and Katha performances. It is said during this period it is very auspicious for Ramayana parayana in particular and all other parayanas.

Upakarma:—This festival is celebrated on the full moon day of the Hindu month Shravan (July-August). The presiding deity of this gala day is Varuna, the sea-god. Fairs are held on the seashore or river banks to which people flock in large numbers. There are ceremonial baths, and offerings are made to Varuna. The chief characteristic of the festival is the throwing of cocoanuts into the sea as offerings. This is a day, very holy for Brahmins. Those who wear the sacred thread, do '*tarpanam*' to gods and rishis. A day after, everyone, who has done Upakarma, will recite '*Gayatri Japam*' 1008 times.

Viswamitra is also mentioned in the Vedas as the seer to whom was revealed the celebrated Mantra '*Gayathri*' a repetition of which is considered of great merit by the Hindus. The following is the substance of the Gayatri.

"Let us meditate on the adorable light of the divine ruler (Savitri). May it guide our intellects. Desirous of food, we solicit the gift of the splendid sun (Savitri) who should be studiously worshipped. Venerable men, guided by the understanding, salute this divine sun (Savitri) with oblations and praise."

Janmashtami:—Janmashtami, the birthday of Krishna falls in the month of Shravan (July-August). The celebrations are performed with great grandeur in places where Krishna is worshipped *i.e.*, in North India, Brindavan, Dwaraka and some other places, though in South India, it is performed as Sri Jayanthi by all Hindus. This is celebrated as a religious festival by all sects of Hindus in India.

The mode of celebrating it consists of fasting and worshipping an image of Krishna as a baby. The feet of Krishna are painted in the houses. The hour of the celebration is mid-night and the occasion is of great significance in and around Mathura.

Ganesha Chaturthi:—The fourth day of Bhadrapad is sacred to Sri Ganesha. Clay figures of Ganesha are made, worshipped and then drowned in a river, tank or sea. The images are decorated with flowers and taken in procession to the water-course with music and dancing. After the image is put into the water, a handful of clay or sand is brought in the tray or on the stool used for carrying it and ceremoniously thrown into the barn, the grain barrels and particularly into the room in which provisions are stored, believing that this will ensure good crops in the next season. It is said to be inauspicious to see the moon on Ganesha Chaturthi. It is said Lord Krishna was accused of the murder of Prasena and the theft of Syamantaka due to his looking at the moon on Ganesh Day. Ganesh Chaturthi is performed in splendour and pomp in Western India, especially by Maharashtrians. As said in '*Amarakosam.*

विनायको विघ्नराज द्वैमातुर गणाधिपा: ।
अप्येकदन्तहेरम्ब लम्बोदरगजानना: ।।

The festivity commences on the birthday of the god and ends after eleven days when the images are taken out from houses in multi-coloured palanquins and chariots to the spot of immersion. The biggest show of the festival is the procession on the last day, which proceeds at snail's gallop through the principal streets of the towns and villages and terminates at places where all the images are immersed. In Bombay this procession can be witnessed either at Beach or Shivaji Park.

Brahmotsavam:—Brahmotsavam at Tirupati, which generally falls in September is a festival which attracts large crowds from all over India. On an average, 3 lakhs of pilgrims visit Tirupati on every day of Brahmotsavam which lasts for ten days. Venkatachalapathi is called as Balaji in North India. He has got vibhuthi or glory about him. As said by Lord Krishna in the 10th chapter of Gita:

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेववा ।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोंशसंभवम् ।।

Sri Sankaracharya in Viveka Chudamani (Slokas 31 and 32) refers that among the things conducive to liberate, Bhakthi holds

the supreme place. The seeking after one's real nature is designated as devotion. In the 32nd verse, he mentions that others maintain that the inquiry into truth of one's own self is devotion. The inquirer about the truth of the Atman who is possessed of the above mentioned means of attainment should approach a wise preceptor who confers emancipation from bondage. It is in the search for the self that man indulges in nine kinds of activities which are nine ways of worshipping God, such as listening to his praises, singing his praises, being friendly with him, completely surrendering oneself to him etc.

As said by H.H. Sri Sankaracharya in ' Vivekachudamani ':

मोक्षकारणसामग्र्यां भक्तिरेव गरियसी ।
स्वस्वरूपानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्यभिधीयते ॥
स्वा त्मतत्त्वानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्यपरे जगु: ।

The various festivals represent man's attempt to seek his self in the outer world and ultimately see his inner self.

The apacharas—what one shall not do in presence of God or place of worship.

There are about thirty transgressions to which a worshipper of the Deity is liable:—

1. To ride into the premises sacred to a deity or to enter a place of worship (even) with wooden sandals under one's feet:

We should not enter a place of worship wearing wooden sandals. It is considered great apachara among Hindus to enter a place of worship with foot-wear. At any temple, one has to remove his foot-wear. Even doing prayer with foot-wear is not permissible among Hindus. Whether it is wooden foot-wear or wooden sandals or leather foot-wear, it will have to be removed before entering a temple proper, or even a place of worship in one's own house.

2. Failure to celebrate or attend (when invited) sacred festivals such as the Rathayatra (conducting the Deity) in a festive procession on a chariot on the day appointed for the same, Janmashtami (the Birthday of Lord Sri Krishna) and so on:

This is made applicable generally. This is all subject to the work one has got and the nature of the business one has to attend to. In any case, any believer should attend the festivals, chariot processions etc., on festive occasions, nearest to his place of residence and wherever convenient.

3. Failure to salute an image of the Deity after beholding it.

Very rarely will a Hindu fail to salute an image of the Deity after seeing it. Any believer of Hinduism will resort to bowing and prostrating before the Deity.

4. To visit a temple in an impure state;

One should not go to the temple when one has pollution. It is preferable that one goes to the temple immediately after bath. Though bathing is not considered a prerequisite to go to a temple, one should clean his hands and feet and put on his caste marks and go to the temple.

5. To salute the Deity by raising only one hand:

No one will salute the Deity by raising one hand. It is a universal practice that Hindus raise both their hands to salute the Deity. It will be considered as a mark of respect only when both the hands are raised to bow to the Deity.

6. To go on walking round the Lord without pausing awhile before Him after every full round, or merely walking round in front of the Lord.

Walking round the Deity is called 'Pradakshina.' It is not enough if one walks in front of the Deity. When doing more than one Pradakshina (for every Pradakshina) every one should bow to the Deity with properly raised hands and mind fixed on the Idol.

7. To squat with one's legs stretched in front of the Deity:

To squat with one's legs stretched before the Deity is an apachara. One should not squat with one's legs stretched even in the presence of elderly persons or devotees. This is considered a mark of disrespect. It is objectionable to squat or stand before the Deity.

8. To squat with one's knees up and encircled by one's arms before the Deity:

To squat with one's knees up and encircled by one's arms is a mark of disrespect not only before the Deity but also in the company of respectable people and before elders. This is a very common apachara which has to be avoided.

9. To lie down before the Lord:

One should not lie down before the Lord. One should with all respect stand or sit properly. It is not for lying down before the Lord that one goes to the temple. This is a mark of disrespect and inattention. This should be avoided.

10. To dine before the Deity;

Dining before the Deity is a mark of disrespect and also classed as a misdeed but this does not include prasadas taken in Srivaishnavites temples. Dining in this context means regularly eating. In the Ahobila Mutt, there are aradhanas regularly arranged when people take their mid-day or night meal—but one should not dine before Deity. One should take only prasadas given which do not form a regular food.

11. To tell a lie before the Deity:

Telling a lie even in the ordinary course is wrong; especially before the Deity it is very wrong. It is for ceasing our sins and omissions that we go to the Deity but not to accumulate sins by uttering lies.

12. To speak loudly before the Deity:

One should not distrub the devotees by speaking loudly before the Deity. Speaking loudly is a sign of disrespect to the Deity. It will be noticed that disciples close their mouths with their hands partially and talk in a low tone as a mark of respect. This should all the more be the case before the Deity.

13. To talk with another before the Deity:

One should not distrub one's concentration by talking to others before the Deity. One must concentrate only on the Deity.

Talking should be done only outside the temples and not before the Deity.

14. To exclaim in front of the Lord:

One should not try to get information or discuss politics or other social topics in the temple but the discussion in the temple should be confined to the Deity.

15. To quarrel in front of the Deity:

It is not for quarrelling that one goes to the temple. Quarrelling even outside the temple is bad but in the precincts of the temple is worse. On the other hand, one should pray to the Deity that he should be saved from quarrels.

16. To torment another before the Lord:

We should not give any trouble to anybody either before the Lord or anywhere. By trying to torment before the Lord, the concentration of the person who torments and also the victim is lost and the purpose of going to pray to the Lord is defeated.

17. To bless another before the Deity:

It is for the blessings of the Lord we go to the Deity. It is not for receiving blessings of another that one goes to the temple or to the place of worship. If it is a question of receiving blessings from anybody else, it can be received somewhere other than the place of worship. But it is quite in order to show our respect for Acharyas in the temple when they come to the temple.

18. To speak harsh words to another before Deity;

One should talk in a pleasant, truthful and beneficent manner when one goes to the temple as generally referred to in the 17th Chapter of the Gita. By speaking harsh words, one loses his temper and consequently his concentration also.

19. To cover oneself all over with a blanket before the Deity:

One should take his upper cloth, tie it on his waist, so that nothing can hinder his view of the Deity. If one covers himself all over with a blanket, or any cloth he may not see the Deity.

To maintain respect for the Deity, one should keep his clothes clean and wear them properly and not allow the view of the deity to be hindered or let his blanket hinder the view of another devotee who is in the temple.

20. To revile another before the Deity;

One should not abuse others either before the Deity or outside the temple. One should not speak ill nor think ill of another man. This is the ancient adage. By reviling another man, one reviles himself. One becomes impure.

21. To extol another before the Deity;

As the Deity is the highest genus sought for and being the object of concentration, nobody should praise an ordinary person or anyone else before the Deity. One should mutter prayer to the Deity but not sing praises of anybody else before the Deity.

22. To utter indecent words before the Deity:

23. To fast before the Deity:

This is prohibited even in the scriptures. There was one occasion when a political fast was resorted to. On the example of great men fasting, many people started fast even for material purposes. If a great man does anything objectionable the world also is inclined to follow the same. Fasting before the Deity for material or spiritual purposes is not considered religious. It is hoped this aspect of fasting will be looked at in its proper perspective.

24. To worship the Lord with ordinary materials even when one can afford to offer Him more valuable articles;

On occasions, when preparations are made for making offerings to the Deity, people purchase inferior ghee while they themselves use superior ghee for dining purposes. This is most objectionable. We must offer the best available to the Lord and after offering, we may take the same. Under no circumstances should we indifferently offer inferior articles to the Deity when we can afford to offer more valuable articles.

25. To eat or drink anything that has not been offered to the Deity:

Whether we take water, flowers or fruits or leaves, we must offer them to the Deity first and then take it for ourselves. The lord is so magnanimous that if you offer any of these things with devotion, he will take them.

26. Failure to offer to the Lord a fruit peculiar to the season before giving it to anyone else:

During mango season, one should offer mangoes to the Deity; otherwise, throughout one can offer plantain in good condition and according to the season and availability we must offer to the Lord and then give it to anyone else or take ourselves.

27. To sit with one's back over against the Deity:

One should not sit showing his back to the Deity. It is a serious apachara which should be avoided. On and of, in forgetfulness young boys may slip into this error. But they should be cautioned against this particular slip (apachara).

28. Failure to greet one's preceptor, enquire after his health and extol him:

This is called (the omission) Bhagavata Apachara. We must all devote attention not only to God but to real devotees of God who are called real bhakthas. Bhagavatha apachara is considered to be worse than the apachara to Bhagavan.

29. To indulge in self-praise:

Last but not least, one should not indulge in self-glorification or self-praise before the Deity. Self-glorification or self-praise is always bad whether before the Deity or anywhere else.

30. To revile any deity whatsoever:

One should not talk ill of any Deity; whatever persuasion a man may be, he should respect other Deities. A Vaishnavite should not talk ill of Siva and Saivite should not talk ill of Vishnu. These Deities are different aspects of the same Supreme being. Therefore, nobody should indulge in reviling another man's faith or the Deity another man worships. But everyone can have his preferences in the matter of worship.

'Prapathi' the Doctrine of absolute surrender.

Cause and effect are nature's revelation, we reap as we sow, As said in the 6th Chapter of the Gita.

पार्थ नैवेह नामुत्र विनाशस्तस्य विद्यते ।
नहि कल्याणकृत्कश्चित् दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ।।

Never doth anyone who worketh righteousness, tread the path of woe. In other words, as Socrates said, no evil can come to a good man. If one discharges his duty properly, he has nothing to be afraid of. One should not have to worry about the consequences of his actions, provided one acts according to his conscience. " Act according to conscience, come what may"—Shakespeare.

There is a belief that a man can lead an unrestrained life and live in a licentious manner and in his old age if he becomes penitent, he gets salvation. There is some point in this belief. If a man becomes penitent, he will start doing good things and by the order of evolution, he will get purified; but this should not mean that a man can wilfully remain pleasure seeking and wait for the old age to act properly and become God-fearing. The *prapathi* in Visishtadvaitha is only to make a man penitent. If a man becomes penitent and surrenders everything to God, he is likely to become pure and in the order of evolution, he is likely to become perfect and attain salvation. There is a chance of this option given to the adherents of the Visishtadvaitha being misused. The misuse is of two kinds. One is to go on leading an objectionable life upto a very late age. hoping to become a penitent or a prapanna in the evening of one's life. This will not satisfy the requirements of the prapathi of Visishtadvaitha. Another misuse to which this is put to is even after having had prapathi in old age, a person will think that he has got immunity from sins and does not change, his pleasure seeking habits believing that the Acharya, will save him from all sins once he has had his prapathi. This is much worse than the previous type of misuse. The proper course is neither love thy life nor hate what thou livest, live well long or short leave it to heaven.

The question that can be asked about critics of prapathi are that does it mean that all those who do not adopt Visishtadvaitha go to Hell or is it only the adherents of Visishtadvaitha who have got a short cut to salvation instead of through evolution of moral and ethical standards. Does it also mean that before the doctrine of prapathi was propounded, people did not get salvation? The answer is according to the order of evolution of humanity and the evolution of the world, the doctrine has been found, which will fit in with the requirements of the time and save the adherents from damnation by changing their life from a wilful waste to that of a sublime one.

There is also another side to the question. Carlyle used to say that there was one man in the French Revolution who was so healthy that he honestly thought that there was no death. Another man, who had a weak body and was so nervous thought that he had the kingliest abhorrence of death. Carlyle, believed that the deeds done in the body lie forever unaltered and do bear their fruit, as long as eternity shall last. With another breath, Carlyle also said that people should repent and become penitents. He did not believe that people who act wrongly have no conscience but he believed that the person who wilfully acts against his conscience knows what he is doing.

Basis and Theory of Prapathi or Self Surrender.

According to those who believe in transmigration of souls when the Jivatma leaves one body it enters into another and so on successively, until our soul becomes sufficiently purified to be ranked among those which, in the fulness of time, the creator considers worthy of everlasting bliss. Although the doctrine of transmigration of souls is commonly known, many men and women do not find adequate reason for believing in it, since there are very few persons who can remember the different transmigrations of their souls. It ordinarily happens that when a soul leaves a body in which it has been confined and enters into another, it loses all recollection either of the knowledge it had acquired or of the events in which it played a part. Thus our errors are continually hidden from us, and we embark upon a new career with a soul as fresh, and as prone to error and vice.

Moreover, if the soul were to carry with it the memories of its past in its transmigrations, it would be unavoidably weighed down by the fetters of such memories and perhaps preoccupied by memories of what it had been than what it has to be and might neglect the duties proper in its present abode and so ruffle the harmony of the universe instead of preserving such harmony.

Hence our souls, fated to pass from body to body throughout a long cycle of centuries, would nearly always be miserable if they remembered what they had been. A soul, for instance, which had once animated the body of a king, could not avoid keen pangs on finding itself housed in a reptile, or in the carcass of one of those obscure mortals whose misery makes them still more to be pitied. A man who found himself in the lap of luxury, or raised to a high position might, if he remembered having been a worm, less abuse the affluent position which the goodness of providence had ordained for him. The doctrine of surrender wants to allay the fears of the believers by promising something for the repentant sinner and the atheist.

Carlyle believed that every activity of life should be permeated by religion. Religion should be an all embracing heavenly canopy permeating and covering all the walks of life. He also ridicules shams and cants.

As said in the seventh chapter of the Gita:

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ।।

(At the close of many births the man full of wisdom cometh unto Me; " Vasudeva is all," saith he, the Mahatma, very difficult to find).

It is true that in the Ramayana and also in the Gita that remission of sins is dealt with by Sri Rama and Sri Krishna respectively; but is a question of understanding the significance correctly. The significance of the doctrine propounded in the Visishtadvaitha is that only a man who surrenders himself completely can be spiritually transformed and become pure so that he can qualify himself to perfection and salvation.

" Dhruva's Devotion and worship of the Lord."

Suniti and Suruchi were the two wives of King Uttanapada. Of these, Suruchi was the more beloved of her lord, but not so the other one, whose son was Dhruva. On a certain day, while fondling Suruchi's son Prince Uttama, whom he was seated on his lap, the king did not welcome Dhruva, who too sought to climb to his lap. Her co-wife's son, thus striving, Suruchi was exceedingly proud, and spoke spitefully " O! child, you are not fit to ascend the royal throne, in as much as, though sprung from the king's loins, you were not conceived by me. Propitiating the Supreme Person through austere penance, seek rebirth as my son by His grace if you covet the King's throne."

Dejected by the remarks of his step-mother, Dhruva left his father, who kept gazing mutely, and went away crying loudly into the presence of his own mother.

तमेव वत्साश्रयभृत्यवत्सलं मुमुक्षुभिर्मृग्यपदाब्जपद्धतिम् ।
अनन्यभावे निजधर्मभाविते मनस्यवस्थाप्य भजस्व पूरुषम् ॥

She told him to take refuge in Him alone, who is so fond of His devotees and access to whose lotus feet is sought after by men keen to get liberated; and, imprinting His image on his mind, purified by devotion to his duty and exclusively attached to Him, and adore the Supreme Person. None other than the Lord with Lotus-like eyes, can wipe out the sorrow.

Hearing the words thus addressed by his mother which were conducive to the object sought after by him, Dhruva fully controlled his mind by force of his reason and went away from his father's capital. When Narada heard of this and learnt what the child intended to do, he touched the latter's head with his purifying hand and said "Oh! the spirit of the Kshatriyas, who cannot brook insult!..Though a child, he has taken to heart the stinging words of his step-mother." Narada said " Sages fail to discover His path even though they seek for it with the help of abstract meditation coupled with rigorous self-discipline carried on in a detached way through numberless births. Therefore, let this futile pertinacity of yours cease; you may strive when the time for practices leading to final beatitude comes. A man should

be pleased at the sight of one who is superior in qualities, should have tender feelings towards one who is inferior in accomplishments and seek friendship with one who is on a par with him. By doing so a man is never overwhelmed with afflictions.

" The mind of a man who thus contemplates on the Lord's

एवं भगवतो रूपं सुभद्रं ध्यायतोमनः ।
निवृत्या परया तूर्णं सम्पन्नं न निवर्तते ॥

most blessed form is soon immersed in supreme bliss and never gives up meditation."

Also, hear from me, O! prince, the most secret formula which should be muttered along with the meditation and by repeating which for seven days and nights a man is able to behold the Siddhas moving in the air. The Mantra is ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय. While repeating this sacred formula, a wise man should perform the Lord's worship with the help of material substances, using various articles with due regard to the differences of place and time. He should worship the Lord with undefiled water, flowers, wild roots and fruits etc., sprouts of approved plants, barks of trees and with the Tulasi so beloved of the Lord. Having secured an image of stone or any other substance, he should worship the Lord through the same or through the medium of earth, water and so on, and with his mind and speech duly controlled, he should subsist on a limited quantity of wild fruits etc., and remain calm and collected and absorbed in contemplation. He should also mentally survey the soul-stirring deeds the glorious Lord will perform in the course of the manifestations, he assumes according to His pleasure by His own incomprehensible Maya. One should offer to the Lord, who stands revealed in the form of a Mantra, all the articles of worship prescribed for Him by the ancients, while repeating this very Mantra, consisting of 12 letters.

Thus instructed by the Sage, the prince went round the sage and bowing low to him, proceeded to the holy Madhuvana, adorned with the footprints of Sri Hari.

At Madhuvana, Dhruva after bathing in the Yamuna and having remained without food that night and thus purified, he waited upon the Lord with a concentrated mind according to the

Sage's instructions. Eating the Kapittha and Badari fruit just enough to keep his body and soul together at the end of every three nights, the prince spent one month in worshipping Sri Hari. And likewise, during the second month the child adored the all-pervading Lord, feeding on withered blades of grass and leaves etc., every sixth day. He spent the third month waiting upon the glorious Lord through Samadhi, taking water alone every nineth day. Having controlled his breath, he fixed his mind and meditated on the supreme Divinity during the fourth month too, inhaling the air every twelfth day. When the fifth month commenced the prince stood motionless like a post on one foot, contemplating on Brahma with his breath fully controlled. Withdrawing his mind, the substratum of the senses and their objects, from all other objects, he fixed it on the form of the Lord enthroned in the heart and perceived nothing else. As he contemplated on the Soul of the universe as no other than himself, stopping his breath as well as the function of his senses, all the worlds as well as their guardian deities resorted for protection to Sri Hari, for they felt much agonised for want of breath.

स वै धिया योगविपाकतीव्रया हृत्पद्मकोशे स्फुरितं तटित्प्रभम् ।
तिरोहितं सहसैवोपलक्ष्य बहि:स्थितं तदवस्थं ददर्श ।।

The Lord flew on the back of Garuda to Madhuvana with a longing to see His devotee. Dhruva saw that the form, brilliant as a flash of lightning, that was revealed in the lotus of his heart by an intellect sharpened by the ripeness of Yoga had suddenly vanished and he beheld the same figure standing without.

His wish was that he might sing the glory of the Lord; but by virtue of His residing in every heart, He, The Lord, read Dhruva's purpose. Being but a child, Dhruva knew not how to hymn the Lord; and therefore having compassion on the King's son who stood before him with joined hands, he touched Dhruva's two cheeks with the conch. Dhruva prayed to the Lord; " May I, for the purpose of listening to the themes touching Thee, associate with those noble souls that for ages cherish Thee with veneration. I desire the society of the good." As soon as Dhruva prayed in this manner the Lord had pity on him and the consequence was that Dhruva had a knowledge of the two forms (*viz.*, individual soul and supreme spirit, of the Lord which had hitherto been un-

known to him. "Thou art free and perfectly pure, and omniscient. Thou art the Soul, Thou art without a shadow of change. Thou art the Primeval Person. You are whole, without beginning, without end, without change and absolute joy. I take refuge under you my Lord. O Reverend One, thy form is supreme happiness."

" It is You alone, O! Lord, who having evolved the Mahattattva and all these phenomena by Your own potency called Maya, consisting of the three Gunas which are capable of assuming multitudinous forms—enter them as their Inner Controller and presiding over the illusory senses appear as many, though really one, even as fire appears diversified in relation to different pieces of wood.

" You are the same as the Supreme Person, who at the end of a cycle reposes with none beside Him save Lord Ananta and on his very coil, withdrawing all this universe into His belly and His eyes turned inward. Nay, it is in the seed-vessel of the gold lotus representing all the fourteen worlds and spread from the ocean of Your navel that the shining Brahma appears! Witnessing by Your unobstructed vision the different states of the mind, You appear as Vishnu for the preservation of the universe and are altogether distinct.

" You are no other than Brahma, the cause of the Universe, indivisible, without beginning or end, purely blissful in character and changeless. I take refuge in You. In the eyes of Him who constantly adores You as an embodiment of supreme bliss, Your lotus feet, O! Lord, are the only true blessing as compared with other boons. Nevertheless, You foster even wretched devotees like us, impatient as You are to shower Your grace on them."

Thus extolled by that sagacious child, who cherished a noble purpose, the Lord who is fond of His devotees, cheerfully received the praises and spoke as follows:—

" I know the cherished desire of your heart. O kshatriya boy, though it is difficult to attain, I grant it, O child of commendable vow! May prosperity wait on you. I bestow on you O blessed one, that effulgent lasting abode which has not been attained to by others and to which the entire stellar sphere—consisting of

planets, lunar mansions and stars stands fastened. It survives even those who live for a whole day of Brahma and the stars presided over by Dharma, Agni, Kasyapa and the seven Rishis, the Venus and other stars too revolve round it, ever keeping it to their right. When your father retires to the forest after handing over the earth, you will rule over the globe for a period of thirty-six thousand years, firmly established in righteousness and with your senses unimpaired. Again, when your half-brother, Uttama loses his life in a hunting expedition, his mother will enter a forest fire while searching for him in the forest, he being the only subject of her thought.

" Therefore, worshipping Me through a number of sacrifices, and having enjoyed true blessings in this life, you will ultimately fix your thoughts on Me. Thereby you will ascend to my abode which is above all other spheres and is situated even higher than the seven Rishis (the Ursa Major) attaining to which one does not return. Beyond the region where sunlight, moonlight or stars-light shines, where fire does not burn, the Lord said Dhruva would exist."

Thus glorified and having promised to him His own realm, the Lord, who bears the emblem of Garuda on His banner, rose to His own abode, while the child stood gazing.

The points to be noted here are that Dhruva, the true devotee of god, had the wisdom to resort to the lotus-feet of Vasudeva. He propounded the philosophy of attaining material and spiritual prosperity by reciting the Mantra containing 12 letters. But Dhruva had a purpose to serve. He wanted to win a Kingdom and material success by his prayer. In this respect Prahlada excels him. Prahlada was trampled by elephants and subjetced to suffering. Praises of Lord Narayana were continuously on his lips. He had no ambition to achieve by praying to Lord Narayana. He only wanted to demonstrate to his father Hiranyakasipu the glory of Lord Narayana.

PRAHLADA.

Hiranyakasipu, the king of Daityas, was at the height of his glory and power. He had inborn hatred for God Vishnu because his brother Hiranyaksha had been killed by him. He

had, therefore taken a vow to wreak vengeance on the Devas. He ordered that the name of Vishnu should not be uttered by any of his subjects. The performance of yagna and all rituals were interdicted since the Vedas established the existence of God Vishnu. The word Hari was eliminated from all books and the mind of his subjects.

Hiranyakasipu's one desire was to conquer death and with that end in view he stipulated the request that neither water nor fire, man nor God, animate or inanimate, or weapon should be the cause of his death: neither inside nor outside earth nor air the place neither day nor night the time for his death. The Creator granted his request. Hiranyakasipu blessed with his boon became a tyrant. He felt that Might was right.

Hiranyakasipu appointed Chanda and marka as teachers to his son Prahlada. Chanda and Amarka were the sons of Sukra-charya, the priest of the asuras.

Prahlada as a Divine Child.

It is difficult to recount Prahlada's excellences which are innumerable. The greatness of Prahlada, in whom could be seen a natural affinity for Lord Vasudeva is referred to. Having laid aside playthings even as a child, Prahlada, who looked like a dunce by reason of his mind being fully absorbed in the Lord, and whose soul was possessed by Lord Sri Krishna, as though by some spirit, did not view the world as such (as it appears to worldly men, but as full of Sri Krishna). Sitting or walking, eating or drinking, lying down or speaking, he was never conscious of these acts, finding himself constantly folded in the arms of Lord Govinda (the protector of cows). Now he would cry (in agony at the sudden disappearance of the Lord), his mind overwhelmed with the thought of Lord Vishnu; now (when the Lord appeared again) he laughed and full of delight at His thought he would now sing His praises at the pitch of his voice. He would shriek with open throat and dance casting all basefulness to the winds (as it were). Now imagin-ing himself to be (none else than) the Lord and completely merged in Him, he imitated His doings.

One day Hiranyakasipu asked his son what the latter regarded as good. Prahlada replied that souls whose mind is ever disturbed

ith the false ideas of 'I' and 'mine' held these to be good; that ıving abandoned one's home, which degrades one's soul, just ‹e a well whose mouth is hidden, one should go to the woods ıd take refuge in Sri Hari.

On hearing the words of his son (Prahlada) so full of faith . Lord Vishnu, the demon (Hiranyakasipu) laughed and said: The intellect of youngsters is perverted by the machinations f others. Let the child be properly guarded, so that his intellect ıay not be perverted by Brahmans devoted to Vishnu and living ıcognito at the preceptor's residence."

As for the vision of Prahlada he saw the supreme spirit itself escribed (by the wise) as one whose ways cannot be easily comrehended by those that are labouring under the misapprehension ıat "he is my own and he is another." and in whose quest even ȝreat) exponents of the Veda such as Brahma, the Creator, get ewildered. Indeed it is He who is responsible for changing his utlook and making it universal. He told his preceptors that ıst as iron moves of itself in the vicinity of a magnet, so his mind ınaccountably was drawn towards Lord Vishnu who holds the liscus Sudarsana in one of His four hands.

Having brought Prahlada to their residence, the preceptors ›f the Daityas praised and coaxed him and questioned him in ,oft words as to wherefrom he imbibed the perversion of his in-.ellect which was not found in the other daitya boys who were ıis companions. They pleaded with him to reveal who his teachers were and if the aberration of his mind was brought about by others.

Prahlada replied that it is only His Maya that brings about :he false notion in men's mind that one is one's own and one is another when the Lord is propitious, the false notion in men, embracing the destruction that "another is he and another am I found in beasts," is dispelled.

The preceptors taught the child by texts dealing with the first three objects of human pursuit, earthly possessions, gratification of the senses and religious merit not with final beautitude. One day Hiranyakasipu asked Prahlada his child to repeat something excellent which the child had fully mastered.

Prahlada replied:

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदम् ।।

To hear the names, praises and stories of Lord Vishnu and chant them, to remember Him, to wait upon Him, to offer worship and salutation to Him, to dedicate one's actions to Him, to cultivate friendship to Him and to offer one's own self to Him are reckoned to be the highest forms of learning. Mind becomes pure by the practice of these nine methods of Bhakthi.

Indeed a hundred years is reckoned to be the length of a man's life. Half of it is of no use to a man who has not been able to subdue his mind; for, consigned to blinding ignorance he remains lying down during the night. Twenty elapses in infancy, when the fellow remains steeped in ignorance and in boyhood, when he remains absorbed in play; and twenty years roll by in helplessness, when his body is in the grip of senility. The rest actually passes away in negligence, when the man remains attached to his home through desire which cannot be easily satiated and through overwhelming infatuation.

पुंसो वर्षशतं ह्यायुस्तदर्धं चाजितात्मनः ।
निष्फलं यदसौ रात्र्यां शेतेऽन्धं प्रापितस्तमः ।।
मुग्धस्य बाल्ये कौमारे क्रीडतो याति विंशतिः ।
जरया ग्रस्तदेहस्य यात्यकल्पस्य विंशतिः ।।
दुरापूरेण कामेन मोहेन च बलीयसा ।
शेषं गृहेषु सक्तस्य प्रमत्तस्यापयाति हि ।।

Srimad Bhagavata.

Then Hiranyakasipu devised many methods to kill Prahlada. He first ordered his armed men to kill him by weapons. Prahlada sat in deep meditation of God Vishnu and no arrow or any deadly weapon could cause him any injury. He remained unaffected. Then the royal elephants were ordered to tread upon him; serpents bit him; he was hurled down from mountain tops; his food was poisoned; the five elements were roused against him; but all these attempts to kill him proved futile: Hiranyakasipu was in a fix and he began to think as to what might be the ultimate result of this conflict between him and his son.

One day, looking at Prahlada he said: " Where is that Lord of the universe other than me, that has been often mentioned by you, O, wretched one? If it is urged that he is everywhere wherefore is he not seen in the pillar? I being all-in-all, here do I severe your head from your trunk, a braggart that you are. Let Hari who is the asylum sought by you, protect you to-day!." Thus tormenting again and again his son, Hiranyakasipu sprang from his exalted seat, and hit the pillar with his fist. That very moment there rose in that pillar a most terrific crash, as a result of which the shell of the cosmic egg cracked and on hearing which it reached the spheres of Brahma and others. They for their part actually suspected the dissolution of their very abodes. In order to substantiate the utterance of His servant and His presence in all objects, the Lord appeared in the pillar of the court, assuming a queer form which was neither that of a beast nor that of a human being, bearing the form of a man-lion, threw Hiranyakasipu away down at the entrance, on His thighs, as a serpent would knock down a rat, He tore him with His claws and killed him in an evening hour which was neither a day nor night thus without violating the boons granted by the Creator to Hiranyakasipu.

It is said that Prahlada did penance even when he was in embryo for 1000 years. Dhruva the great devotee did penance only for six months and came back to the Kingdom and did further penance. Prahlada represents स्मरण speciality in Bhakthi. Hence his devotion to the Lord is considered greater than that of Dhruva.

Rishabha Deva's descent, Life and Teachings.

Once Parikshit asked Sukracharya about how Priyavrata who was attached to his wife, house, children and so on, attained perfection and came to develop unswerving devotion to Lord Sri Krishna.

Sukracharya replied that the Lord cannot be known through the ordinary means of cognition and the living beings, ever maintain their connection with a body, bestowed on them by the unmanifest Lord, for birth and death, grief, infatuation and fear, joy and sorrow, as well as for doing work. What harm can the home do to the wise man who has subdued his senses and delights in the self? Resorting to the citadel of the lotus-like feet of the Lord

whose navel is the seat of a lotus, one could conquer the six enemies, in the shape of the five senses and the mind that have not been controlled. His father being thus engaged. Agnidhra, who followed his commands, duly protected the people of Jambudwipa as his own progeny, keeping his eye on Dharma. Seeking the realm of the manes he collected the requisities for worship and with concentration of mind and asceticism adored the glorious Brahma in a valley of Mount Mandara. Having come to know this, the glorious Brahma sent down an Apsara, Purvachitti by name, who used to sing in his court. The prince succumbed to the dominating influence of the most powerful god of love who had found an open door to his heart, the moment the prince saw her. Employing a language clever in expressing things, Prince Agnidhra, who possessed the intelligence of gods and proved a past master in winning over the young woman, propitiated that celestial damsel by showing her great regard. She too, whose mind was captivated by the intelligence, amiability, comeliness, youth, splendour and nobility of that leading hero, then enjoyed with that Lord of Jambudwipa, earthly as well as celestial pleasures for a period, extending over ten crore years. Through her, it is said that foremost of kings, Agnidhra, begot nine sons of whom Nabhi was the eldest. Nabhi married queen Meru Devi.

Desirous of obtaining progeny, King Nabhi along with Queen Merudevi, who had no issue, worshipped with a concentrated mind Lord Vishnu. While Nabhi was reverently worshipping Him with a pure heart and while the rites known by the name of Pravargya were proceeding, the heart of the Lord was seized with a longing to accomplish the desired object of His servant because of His affection for His devotees, and He revealed before Him His most independent captivating form which ravished the soul by its limbs, which were pleasing to the mind and eyes. Propitiated by the great seers at the very sacrifice, the Lord was born in the family of King Nabhi in a divine form with a view to obliging that monarch and with intent to teach to the world the sacred vows observed by sages that have no covering on their body except the atmosphere, lead an ascetic life and are pledged to perpetual celibacy. Now, finding marks of divinity manifest in Lord Rishabha from His very birth and His glory mounting every day along with treating all alike, control of the internal and external senses, aversion

to the pleasures of sense, universal domination and perfection in everything, the ministers as well as the people, including the Brahmans, and gods too eagerly wished that He should rule over the earth.

He performed both the types of religious rites, ordained by the scriptures and begot through Jayanti, bestowed on Him by Indra, a hundred sons, who were His own replicas. Of them the eldest and the one possessed of the highest attributes was Bharata, who was indeed a great adept in Yoga and after whom they speak of this land as Bharatavarsha. The Lord who was called Rishabha was God Himself independent eternally free from all evils by His very nature and enjoying absolute bliss; Yet, performing actions like an ordinary mortal. He taught to the ignorant by His own example the duties that had been forgotten through time.

Rishabba Deva's descent life and Teachings.

सर्वाणि मद्धिष्ण्यतया भवद्भिश्चराणि भूतानि सुता ध्रुवाणि ।
सम्भावितव्यानि पदे पदे वो विविक्तदृग्भिस्तदु हार्हणं नः ।।
मनोवाचोदृक्करणेहितस्य साक्षात्कृतं मे परिबर्हणं हि ।
विना पुमान् येन महाबिमोहात् कृतान्तपाशान्न विमोक्तुमीशेत् ।।

Srimad Bhagavatham.

With a pure mind, all living beings, mobile as well as immobile ought to be respected at every step as abodes of Lord Vasudeva; that alone will be Lord's true worship. Lord's propitiation is the reward of the activities of the mind, tongue, eyes and the other Indriyas. For, without propitiating Lord Vasudeva, a man cannot hope to escape from the greatly confounding noose of Death.

As for this body, this body in the mortal world does not deserve to be given up to sensuous pleasures, which are a source of misery and which are enjoyed even by dogs, and other animals. It is worthy of being devoted to sublime austerities whereby the mind is purified; and from purity of mind follows the unending bliss of absorption into the Absloute. The wise speak of service rendered to exalted souls as an open gate to liberation and the fellowship of those who are fond of women as the door opening into hell.

They alone are great who are even-minded, exceptionally calm and composed, free from anger, kind-hearted and pious or again they who regard love offered as the object of human pursuit, who take no delight in men engaged in pursuits calculated to nourish their body nor in a house-hold consisting of wife, children and riches, and who have no selfish interest in the world beyond the maintenance of their body. An erring soul commits sin only when he endeavours to gratify his senses. One should not regard those actions as good, from which has followed this body, which, though non-existent, is a source of misery to the Jiva. The real nature of the soul remains obscure due to ignorance only so long as the Jiva does not enquire into the truth about the Spirit. So long as actions continue to be performed, the mind remains disposed to activity, and it is due to such a mind that the Jiva remains tied to a body. The Spirit being thus veiled by ignorance, the past actions of a man render his mind prone to activity. And so long as there is no love for Lord Vasudeva, the Jiva is not rid of its identification with a body.

Self-realization and aversion for the pleasures of sense, are followed by great ascetics given to self-control and retired from worldly activity, Lord Vasudeva Himself renounced even at home everything except His body, which was the only possession left with Him, and, having absorbed the sacrificial fires into Himself, and taking to the life of a recluse, departed from Brahmavarta as if mad, with dishevelled hair and scantily clad.

Lord Risabhadeva was the very ornament of the protectors of the world; yet His divine glory could not be perceived on account of His behaving as aforesaid like a stupid fellow and because He had adopted the weird appearance, speech and conduct of one who has renounced all worldly attachments and connections.

Karma Yoga practised by Rishabha Deva:

'Karma' means the performance of certain kinds of rites and duties as a result of knowledge acquired by Sastras. The duties consist of Nityakarma and Naimittika karma. Nityakarma including 'Sandhya' etc., has to be performed regularly and is compulsory. Naimittika karma has to be compulsorily performed on specific occasions like the eclipse of the Sun, Moon

etc., and Kamyakarma rites are optiona! as have been chosen to suit one's ability. Gnana Yoga is an uninterupted contemplation on God by one who has developed his mind by Karma Yoga. A person succeeds in attaining to a vision of his self by a practice of Yoga preceded by Karma Yoga and Gñana yoga.

After Karma Yoga and Gñana Yoga, there is Bakthi Yoga which is said to be the direct means to the attainment of the Supreme Goal. In Bakthi Yoga, one contemplates on Bhagawan and this was practised by Rishabha Deva who attained salvation and demonstrated to the other human beings the embodied souls ' what is self or Atman?' Rishabha Deva was considered to be a minor Avatara of Lord Vishnu.

Rishabha Deva's Bhakti Yoga:

Bhakti is the special form of meditation which is of the nature of unsurpassed love towards God and it has for its object the essential nature of Bhagawan who is not dependent on any one else. It is a form of continued supreme attachment to the Lord. By practising everyday Bhakti increases and ultimately there is success of Siddhi. This is also a means for the attainment of salvation or Moksha. This particular Bhakti is ' parabhakti.'

Rishabha Deva wanted to appear as a human being with life and the body. He is an example of the highest form of detachment. He also taught by leading an exemplary life how a person with a family can be non-attached to his body, family life and belongings. The preponderating speciality in Rishabha Deva was his non-attachment as demonstrated by his walking through a burning forest of bamboos irrespective of his body being attached by fire. His teachings to his sons were of great value. He emphasised on the performance of duty without being attached to the fruits of action.

Now, in order to teach to the Yogis the process of giving up the ghost, he thought of quitting his body and, constantly viewing the Supreme Spirit who was directly present in him as identical, ceased to think of his body and gave up his identification with the subtle body. When Lord Rishabhadeva was thus rid of the subtle body, His visible form continued to wander over this globe due to seeming egotism induced by the vestiges of

Yogamaya and visiting as directed by Providence the territories of Konka, Venka, Kutaka and South Karnataka, traversed the forest of the Kutaka mountain like a mad man with dishevelled hair and with a piece of stone in His mouth. Meanwhile a fierce forest conflagration broke out due to the friction of bamboos tossed about by the force of wind and, enveloping the forest on all sides, consumed the body of Rishabhadeva too along with the forest.

This descent of the Lord was intended to give a lesson in the art of liberating oneself to those who are stepped in the quality of Rajas. People recite the following verses conformable to the spirit of such teaching:—" Oh, of the Dwipas and Varshas of the earth, girt with the seven oceans, this land (Bharatavarsha) is exceptionally holy in as much as the people of this land celebrate the blessed deeds of Lord Vishnu associated with His descents."

In this connection, we are reminded of the teachings in the Second Chapter of Gita regarding actions to be performed without caring for the fruits of such action and actions without attachment:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुभूर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

" Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive nor do thou cling to inaction."

दुखेष्वनुद्विग्नमना: सुखेषु विगतस्पृह: ।
वीतरागभयक्रोध: स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

" He whose mind is free from anxiety amid pains, indifferent amid pleasures, free from passion, fear and anger, is called a sage of stable mind.

Essentials of Visishtadvaita.

Gita Bashyam of Sri Ramanuja incorporates the concepts of supra cosmic ascent and supra cosmic descent referred to by Sri Aurobindo in his works. Under the pretext of unloading the weight

of the earth, so that Lord Vishnu may be approachable and accessible to us, descending on the earth, He has attained the visibility of all human sight, performing His divine deeds, attracting the mind and eye of all souls, high and low, sprinkling the world with the nectar-like look and talk pregnant with limitless mercy, warm, heartedness and supreme love.

If a human being has to attain perfection, he has to attempt a supra cosmic ascent. There is no fruition unless this is reciprocated by a supra cosmic descent, which may be described as having been achieved by samashraya neeyathvaya *i.e.*, each individual trying to approach God through the divinely appointed Guru and consequently God descending to the respective places and becoming approachable and accessible to all and attaining the visibility of all human sight, which is described by the term " Sakala Manuja Nayana vishayatham Gathaha " (*i.e.*, man is the meeting place of the supra cosmic ascent and supra cosmic descent). One cannot do better than give a literal translation of the very long, significant and sublime first sentence of Sri Ramanuja Gita Bashyam.

The Lord of Wealth, the single seat of all auspiciousness, opposite of all undesirable unauspiciousness, form of pure bliss, identical with unlimited knowledge, different from all objects other than His own, the extensive ocean of collections of all innumerable auspicious qualities like the transcendental knowledge which is primary and limitless, strength, overlordship, valiance, force and lustre, the one form which is the manifestation of His own desire, which is the reservoir of all celestial, unthinkable, divine, wonderful, permanent, non-depreciative, transcendental, and illuminating qualities like fragrance, beauty, tenderness, charm and youth, wearing numberless celestial ornaments which are suitable to Him, varied, colourful, endless, wonderful, permanent and laudable, possessing celestial arms which benefit His person which are innumerable, whose prowess is inestimable and which are permanent, effective, transcendental and auspicious, the beloved Lord of Goddess of Prosperity whose form is self-willed, and in possession of such permanent and praiseworthy extensive qualities quite in keeping with the form like managnimity of character, and such other faultless, limitless, transcendental innumerable collection of auspicious qualifications, His pair of feet are always praised by the innumerable emancipated souls who by their mental

The Lord Venkateswara, is one of the Archavataras. The Lord manifests Himself in the various forms. He Himself says that He knows the innumerable number of births He had while ordinary human beings cannot know their previous births. In this Yuga, to manifest Himself in a way suitable for human beings to understand and approach the Lord has manifested Himself at various places in India—Srirangam, Kancheepuram, Tirupathi, Simhachalam, Srikurmam, Purushottama, Badrinath etc. Naimisha, Gaya, Ayodya, Dwaraka, Saligram, Pushkara are also the famous and leading holy places of Sri Vaishnavites. There are 108 Tirupathies, all of which are sacred; but the above-mentioned are some of the most sacred. According to the order of evolution of the people in Kaliyuga, our Acharyas like Ramanuja and Vedantha Desika have shown the way to their disciples for attaining salvation. Ramanuja, by the pious life he led, and also Sri Vedanta Desika, by his rigid, orthodox and pious life, have set an example to their disciples. Sri Ramanuja lived to a ripe old age, Sri Vedantha Desika lived up to a very old age. Sri Ramanuja and Sri Desika emphasised on Bhakthi Yoga based on surrender, which is called Saranagathi, or Prapatthi. This is all amplified from Sri Bharatha's worship of Rama's divine feet and Vibishana's surrendering himself to Rama, abandoning his brother Ravana. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy dwells at length on self-surrender as the main desideratum. The Vaishnava philosophy also believes in surrender as the main thing, but the difference is that there is orthodoxy in Sri Vaishnavite system while Sri Aurobindo's system is founded on the Yogic cult. It appeals to the average human being that so long as one is a human being, it is necessary for him or her to submit to God instead of professing to be equal to God and saying that he or she is one with God.

It is possible, when a man goes beyond this finite world, he is able to merge with the infinite; but so long as he is in the finite world, it is necessary to practise abject surrender to God, the divine power. In his Rahasyathraya Sara, Sri Vedanta Desika tries to expel gloom, fear and doubt from the minds of his disciples and followers by pointing out that the sacred 8 letters 'Om Namo Narayanaya' has got meaning, philosophy and fruit. Mentioning the name of Narayana expels doubts about where God is, who is God and what is He. This is a work of Sri Vedanta Desika,

which is very clear, and it leaves no doubt in the minds of his disciples as to its purport. Instead of dealing only with the metaphysical aspect of the question, Sri Desika also deals with the theological side. Nor is the ethical aspect neglected. The good side of devotion of the highest type is only dealt with by Ramanuja and Desika. There are 3 aspects or qualities which manifest themselves in the world—the good, the energetic and the dull—(Sattwic, Rajasic and Thamasic). Sri Ramanuja and Vedanta Desika dealt only with the first one. They have not prescribed mantras or chants, which are calculated to be energetic or dull. In the Manthra Sasthra, there are about 7 crores of manthras. Some of them deal with minor deities, gnomes and spirits. This is alien to Sri Vaishnavite religion. Among the Upasanas, only the Garudopasana, Hayagriva and a few selected satwic upasanas are contemplated. Otherwise, one has to confine himself, to Lord Vishnu and His consort Lakshmi, their Avatars in Vibhava and Archa. While Vishnu represents the supreme power, Mahalakshmi is His consort or His mercy personified, who is inseparable from Him and who appears in everyone of His avatars as His consort etc.

The absolute form of Vishnu which is immutable, infinite and most powerful; the defined form of His, which is most-wonderful and dearer than the other; and also the other forms which He assumes at his own will for his sports—all these, they say, are closely united with Mahalakshmi's transcendental forms and avatars which are ever concurrent with those of Maha Vishnu.

During the month of Brahmotsavam, Lord Srinivasa or Venkateswara known throughout the country as Balaji has got the vibhuthi (glory) to attract large crowds from all parts of India. He is a very powerful deity, who gives not only quick fruits but also salvation. He gives salvation in this world and the next.

This is a famous archavatara in which there is an approach by the seeker and it is also believed that there is a descent from Sri Venkateswara manifested in conceding the requests and answering the prayers of the devotees.

For attainment of desires, various worships are prescribed in Srimad Bhagavatham. Those seeking for the Brahma energy should worship the lord of Brahma (Veda); those seeking for vigour

of the organs should worship Indra; those seeking for offspring should worship Prajapati; those seeking for good fortune should worship the goddess Maya, those seeking for energy should worship Fire, those seeking for wealth should worship the Vasus; those seeking for influence should worship the Rudras endowed with prowess; those seeking for food etc., should worship Aditi; those seeking heaven should worship the sons of Aditi; those seeking for kingdom should worship the Viswa deities; those seeking for the liberty of subjects residing in their own country should worship the Saddhyas; those seeking for long life should worship those deities—the Aswins; those seeking for nutrition should worship the Earth; those wishing to ward off lapse from their position should worship those mothers of all creatures—the two Rodasis; those seeking sway over all should worship the Supreme Spirit; those seeking for celebrity should worship Sacrifice; those seeking for treasures should worship Lord Spirit; those seeking for learning should worship Girisa; those seeking for conjugal love should worship the chaste Uma; those seeking for righteousness should worship the lord of excellent slokas (Vishnu); those desirous of increase of progeny should worship the Pitris; those seeking to remove obstacles should worship the Yakshas; those desirous of strength should worship the plants; those seeking for dominion should worship the divine Manus; those seeking for the destruction of their enemies should worship the Rakshasas; those seeking for enjoyments should worship Soma; and (finally) those who have desired all or who desire all the things combined, or those persons of noble understanding that seek for salvation should with rapt reverence worship the Prime Person (Vishnu) in various forms.

हरि: ॐ श्रिय: पति: निखिलहेयप्रत्यनीककल्याणैकतान:, स्वेतर समस्तवस्तुविलक्षणानन्तज्ञानानन्दैकस्वरूप:, स्वाभाविकानवधिकातिशयज्ञानबलैश्वर्यवीर्यशक्तितेज: प्रभृत्यसंख्येयकल्याणगुणगण महोदधि:, स्वाभिमतानुरूपैकरूपाचिन्त्यदिव्याद्भुतनित्यनिरवद्य निरतिशयौज्ज्वल्यसौगन्ध्यसौन्दर्यसौकुमार्यलावण्ययौवनाद्यनन्तगुणनिधिदिव्यरूप:. स्वोचितविविधविचित्रानन्ताश्चर्यनित्यनिरवद्यापरिमितदिव्यभूषण:, स्वानुरूपासंख्येयाचिन्त्यशक्तिनित्यनिरवद्यनिरतिशयकल्याणदिव्यायुध:, स्वाभिमतानुरूपनित्यनिरवद्यस्वरूपरूपगुणविभवैश्वर्यशीलाद्यनवधिकातिशयासंख्येयकल्याणगुणगण श्रीवल्लभ:, स्वसंकल्पानुविधायिस्वरूपस्थितिप्रवृत्तिभेदाशेषशेषतैकरतिरूपनित्यनिरवद्यनिरतिशयज्ञानक्रियैश्वर्याद्यनन्तगुणगणापरिमितसूरिभि: अनवरताभिष्टुतचरणयुगल:, वाङ्मनसापरिच्छेद्यस्वरूपस्वभाव:, स्वोचितविविधविचित्रानन्तभोग्यभोगोपकरण

भोगस्थानसमृद्धानन्ताश्चर्यानन्तमहाविभवानन्तपरिमाण नित्यनिरवद्याक्षरपरमव्योम, निलय:, विविधविचित्रानन्तभोग्यभोक्तृवर्गपरिपूर्णनिखिल जगदुदयविभवलयशील: परं ब्रह्म पुरुषोत्तमो नारायणो ब्रह्मादिस्थावरान्तम् अखिलं जगत् सृष्ट्वा स्वेन रूपेण अवस्थित:, ब्रह्मादिदेवमनुष्याणां ध्यानाराधनाद्यगोचर: अपि अपारकारुण्यसौशील्यवात्सल्यौदार्यमहोदधि:, खमेव रूपं तत्तत्सजातीयसंस्थानं स्वस्वभावम् अजहदेवस एव कुर्वन् तेषु तेषु लोकेषु अवतीर्य अवतार्य तै:तै: आराधित:, तत्तदिष्टानुरूपं धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाख्यं फल प्रयच्छन्, भूभारावतारणापदेशेन अस्मदादीनाम् अपि समाश्रयोपेयत्वाय अवतीर्य उर्व्यां सकलमनुजनयनविषयतां गत:, परावरनिखिलजनमनोनयनहारि दिव्यचेष्टितानि कुर्वन् पूतनाशकटयमलार्जुनारिष्टप्रलम्बधेनुककालियकेशिकुवलपेयापीडचाणूरमुष्टिकतोसलकंसादीन् निहृत्य अनवधिकदयासौहार्दानुरागगर्भावलोकनालापामृतै: विश्वम् आप्याययन् निरतिशयसैन्दर्यसौशील्यादिगुणगणाविष्कारेण अक्रूरमालाकारादीन् परमभागवतान् कृत्वा पाण्डुतनययुद्धप्रोत्साहनव्याजेन परमपुरुषार्थलक्षणमोक्षसाधनतया वेदान्तोदितं स्वविषयं ज्ञानकर्मानुगृहीतं भक्तियोगम् अवतारयामास ।

तत्र पाण्डवानां कुरूणांच युद्धे प्रारब्ध स भगवान् पुरुषोत्तम: सर्वेश्वरेश्वरो जगदुपकृतिमर्त्य: आश्रितवात्सल्यविवश: पार्थं रथिनम् आत्मानं च सारथिं सर्वलोकसाक्षकं चकार ।

एवम् ज्ञात्वा अपि सर्वात्मना अन्धो धृतराष्ट्र: सुयोधनविजयबुभुत्सय-संजयं प्रपच्छ ।

Preferences do not imply exclusions.

My previous chapter explains how the Visishtadvaita conception of approaching God through a Guru as a supra cosmic ascent and the Lord being and becoming accessible in the form of various kinds of avatars and fulfilling the wishes of his devotees as a supra cosmic descent. But from the yogic point of view, the conceptions of supra cosmic ascent and supra cosmic descent may be interpreted as under:—

The sun light falls on human beings and if human beings are opaque, there will not be any reflection but if they are transparent enough, it is reflected back *i.e.*, figuratively, the supra cosmic rays which descend are reciprocated by the supra cosmic rays of spirituality in man and there is a supra cosmic ascent; but this is a conception which is difficult of realisation by human beings. This is rather symbolical and it means that there must be an influx

of spirituality in man in order to get light and understand the true nature of the soul and Brahman. But I am confining my discussion chiefly to what can be understood from the orthodox scriptures and their interpretation.

Who may be said to be the one god in the world? Who may be said to be the one object which is our sole refuge? Who is he by worshipping whom or hymning whose praises human beings would get what is beneficial?

By always worshipping with reverence and devotion that immutable Being, by meditating on Him, by hymning His praises, and bowing the head unto Him, and by performing sacrifices unto Him, indeed, by always praising Vishnu, who is without beginning and without end or destruction, who is the supreme Lord of all the worlds, and who is the Master and Controller of the universe, one can succeed in transcending all sorrow.

Sankhya Philosophy—Karma Yoga.

Vidya (learning) and Avidya (ignorance), which emancipate and fetter the creatures are the two primary energies created by God's own *Maya*. There is no such thing as Avidya to Brahman, as Avidya has been interpreted to be the imperfection of Brahman. One who has true knowledge does not live in body although he has a body, like one awakening after a dream; whereas the foolish, like one dreaming, is attached to the body even if he has nobody. Although perceiving objects through senses, the learned man, who is above changes, does not consider himself as the agent thereof; whereas the ignorant man, going through actions engendered by qualities and living in a body subject to destiny, becomes attached thereto considering himself as the agent. The learned man is not attached to his senses—sleep, ease, sight, touch, smelling, eating, and hearing—having withdrawn himself from attachment to his body.

Before creation all things existed in one Brahman without any difference. That one, indivisible eternal Brahman, being above the range of mind—(यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मानसा सह) Yatho vacho Nivartante Apraapya Manasa Saha—*i.e.*, words cannot go near and the mind recoils. The eternal Brahman assumed

two-fold forms, *Maya* and manifestation. Of them one was Prakriti identical with cause and effect. The other was the knowledge of objects designated as Purusha. Goodness, energy and dullness or the Satwa, Rajas and Tamas became the qualities of Prakriti, and from them originated the great energy of knowledge. When they were set to action, sprang therefrom Ahankara (consciousness of ego) which gave birth to misconceived notions. Ahankara is three-fold, namely, Vaikarika, Taijasa and Tamasa, is the cause of Tanmatra, senses, and mind, both intellectual and otherwise.

Objects came into being (from Taamasa), the root of Tanmatras (from Taijasa), (the organs, and from Vaikarika the quarters, air, the Sun, Prachetas, Ashwins, fire, Indra, Upendra, Mitraka, and the moon). God sprang into being in that egg lying in waters; the lotus of the world originated from God's navel and from that came into existence the self-create (Brahma). By dint of hard austerities and favour, that soul of the universe created, by the quality of darkness of energy, the Lokas along with the Lokapalas, and three regions, Bhu, Bhuva, and Swas. The heaven became the abode of the celestials, the Bhuvarloka, that of the elements and the mortals; Maharloka and others became the abode of the Asuras and Nagas. All the actions, identical with three-fold qualities, have their course in the three worlds. Yoga, asceticism and withdrawal from the world have for their pure destination the Lokas of Maha, Jana, Tapas and Satya; Bhakti-yoga leads one to God. By God, the ordainer (of all) identical with time, this universe filled with actions is one being raised up and again drowned in the stream of qualities. The small, great, subtle and gross, all the objects that exist are permeated both by Prakriti and Purusha. That which is the end of a thing is also its middle—the changes are for mere use as metallic articles and earthen things. If there is any material cause of an object the first cause is the real one, that which exists in the beginning or end of an object is designated as eternal. Prakriti is the material of the cause, Purusha is the container, Kala (time) is the displayer. As long as the vision (of the Creator) exists so long is the preservation and till its end the work of creation is carried on from one generation to another (for the enjoyment of creatures). The body is resolvable to food, food to seed, seed to ground, ground to smell, smell to water, water to juice, its own tribute, juice into

effulgence, effulgence into colour, colour into air, and air into touch, touch into ether, ether into sound and the senses to their various presiding deities. The deities resolve themselves into mind and the latter terminates in Ahankara, the sound in Tamasa (Ahankara) and that too which lords over all in Mahat. The principle of Mahat, surcharged with qualities, terminates in its own qualities, they again in the Prakriti and this is undecaying time; the time ends in the great Purusha that extends illusion and Purusha ends in God who is Atman and unborn, the soul exists in itself and is devoid of the marks of difference. As the rising of the Sun removes darkness from the sky, so the misconceived notion of difference disappears from his mind who views things in this light.

The learned are enamoured of the Vedas because they have proceeded from the Lord. As by various means of consultation medicine is offered to a boy, so the Vedas indirectly give instructions in actions for the liberation therefrom. That ignorant person, who having no control over his senses, does not perform action, laid down in the Vedas, repeatedly becomes subject to birth and death on account of the impiety for the non-performance of prescribed rites. *A man, being dissociated and consigning everything to the Lord, can attain that accomplished state where there is no action, by the performance of those actions only that are laid down in the Vedas; the Sruti relating to the fruits is only for urging them (to actions).* Whoever wishes to snap the fetters of egoism in this body, should with vedic rites accompanied by Tantric rites worship the Deity Kesava. Acquiring the grace of the preceptor and, following the mode of worship pointed out by him, he should adore the Great Purusha through the image he likes as said in Srimad Bhagavatham. Sitting in a pure state before the idol and purifying his body by the suppression of vital breaths and other processes he should adore Hari. At first adoring in his mind, flowers, earth, Atman and the idol and then with articles of worship as acquired, arranging vessels for keeping water to wash feet and other things he should invoke Him to the image, whom, with concentration he adores Hari in his mind; then subduing his mind etc., he should worship it with principal Mantras. Then the entire family, children and grand children should adore it with respective Mantras accompanied by perfumes, garlands, sunburnt paddy,

incense, lamps and edibles. Duly completing the worship and chanting his glories we should bow to Hari. Thinking himself as entirely permeated by him, he should worship the image of Hari and then placing the flower of blessing on his head he should keep the image in the proper place and finish the worship. Whoever worships according to Tantric mode of worship fire, the sun, water, guest or the Deity in his mind as his own, shall speediy attain final liberation.

In orthodox Hinduism, you have first the Karma marga for life which depends upon the law of Dharma. This is described in the Bhagavatham. Then there is Bhakti marga which is called the induction of the spirit. Your mind is placed in front of a supreme spirit, who induces the spirit within you. Then there is Gñana marga which evolves the spirit of conscious and deliberate reorientation of the mind-world and the mental process. Whether by Dharma, Bhakti or Gñana, Indian philosophy has evolved ways of organising life in accordance with its belief in mind-world which is to be harmonized. The science of Dharma yields a synthesis of economics, politics and the ethics, Karma Yoga produces the same results.

Bhakti Yoga leads to the arts. There are nine ways of doing Bhakti and Puja. These have been described in my previous article. Gñana Yoga leads to science. (Science is partially unified knowledge. Philosophy, is fully unified knowledge). The arts of India flow from Bhakti Yoga. The supreme Indian art is mythology. The ancient saints and seers of India out of their vision and enthusiasm have written Indian mythology. There is a definiteness about their form, colour and character. As Shri. P. Thomas says in his book " Epics, Myths and Legends of India."

" Myths, then, have a meaning. Just as strata of earth give an indication to the life of the earth and even of the progress of life through pre-historic times, myths are thought-fossils which teach us in allegories and symbols the story of cultures and civilizations that preceded ours, and the attempts of primitive man to solve various human problems. As reason and science advance, myths lose much of their religious and dogmatic character, but are not discarded entirely as futile. In fact they still find a prominent place in the emotional life of the community, in art, poetry

and folklore. The cathedrals and palaces of Europe, and the murals, frescoes, paintings and sculptures in them are still a joy to the onlooker, be he Christian, pagan or atheist. The artists of Christendom have liberally borrowed from Greek and Egyptian mythology, and Madonna, the Queen of Heaven, the main inspiration of renaissance art, is traced to the Egyptian **Isis.** To what extent mythology has influenced art in India, every cave and temple and the idols and frescoes within, bear eloquent testimony. Apart from its relation to art, mythology has a scientific aspect. By study of comparative mythology ethnologists have been able to elucidate many obscure points of racial migration and fusion."

Every believer has a right to choose the path of Sankhya, Gñana, Karma or Bhakthi etc., but should not criticise the path chosen by others.

नमोऽस्तु रामाय सलक्ष्मणाय देव्यै च तस्यै जनकात्मजायै ।
नमोऽस्तु रुद्रेन्द्रयमानिलेभ्यो नमोऽस्तु चन्द्रार्कमरुद्गणेभ्य: ॥

Though one may have his preference for Sri Rama (Maha Vishnu) he may also pray to other deities named above and may not have his exclusions.

In accordance with one's natural inclination, one should develop Karma, Sankhya, Gñana or Bhakti for vision (prapatti) on lines suited to his own development. Every person will have his own preference in his choices but his preference should not result in prejudices or exclusions.

The quintessence of Vedanta Desika's Rahasyatrayasara.

तारं पूर्वं तदनु हृदयं तच्च नारायणाये -
त्याम्नायोक्तं पदमवयतां अस्मदाचार्यदत्तम् ।
अङ्गीकुर्वन्नलसमानसा मात्मरक्षाभरं न:
क्षिप्रं देव: क्षिपतु निखिलान् किंकरै श्वर्य विघ्नान् ॥

The first portion refers to the combination of the three letters 'A, U & M' which makes 'OM' which is the first letter of the Astakshara mantra. Then it is called 'Hridayam' *i.e.*, peace in

the invocation which is 'Namaha' and the third portion is called Narayana which is actually the core of the mantra. It is given to us by our Acharya. It is the wealth of all the millions of disciples and a great Vidya. When God takes various shapes such as Man-horse, fish, tortoise, half-lion, dwarf, Rama, Krishna etc., the ordinary human beings are not able to understand.

अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनु माश्रितम् ।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥

As said in the Gita, the people who are not intelligent enough mistake me for an ordinary human being when I assume a human shape.

When the gods come among men, they are not known. Jesus was not; Socrates and Shakespeare were not. Antaneus was suffocated by the gripe of Hercules, but every time he touched his mother-earth his strength was renewed. Man is the broken giant, and in all his weakness both his body and his mind are invigorated by habits of conversation with nature. (EMERSON)

Reverting to Vedanta Desika, he taught that congenital duty ought to be performed though clouded by defects. It is a matter of common observation that people wish to learn philosophy by rote. But the wiser God says, "take the shame, the poverty and the penal solitude that belong to truth-speaking. Try the rough water as well as the smooth. The finished man of the world must eat of every apple once. He must hold his hatreds also at arm's length and not remember spite. He has neither friends nor enemies, but values men only as channels of power. To wade in marshes and sea-margins is the destiny of certain birds, and they are so accurately made for this that they are imprisoned in those places. Each animal out of its habitant would starve. A soldier, a lock-smith, a bank-clerk and a dancer could not exchange functions. Desika has taught how to perform religious duties consistent with the carrying out of congenital duties. In his writings, Shri Vedanta Desika advocated happiness not only in the life after one renounces his body but also happiness in this materialistic world. In one of the slokas in Nyasa Dasaka, he says that this body after a long life and having had various experiences of sanctioned enjoyment according to scriptural

authority in this material world attains to the supreme Purushothama. In one of his slokas in Rahasyatrayasara, he wishes that his disciples should lead a life of Kritayuga, though this is Kaliyuga, by doing penance in Badarikasrama. When one goes to Badarikasrama, one feels as if in a trance. "This heart and eyes, this weight and size are touched, are turned to finest air" as Tennyson put it. Sri Vedanta Desika visualises that everyone should lead a life without cunning, without hate and without spite.

Vedanta Desika took only the quintessence of the mantras as laid in the Gita.

यावनार्थं उदपाने सर्वत: संप्लुतोके ।
तावान्सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्रह्मणस्य विजानत: ।।

As Shri Ramanuja expounded in his Gita Bashya:

यथा सर्वार्थपरिकल्पिते सर्वत: संप्लुतोदके उदपाने पिपासो: यावानर्थ: यावद् एव प्रयोजनं पानीयम् तावद् एव तेन उपादीयते न सर्वम्; एवम् सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानन वैदिकस्य मुमुक्षो: यदेव मोक्षसाधनम् । तद् एव उपादेयं, न अन्यत् ।।

It is said in the second chapter of the Gita that the wiseman takes only from a pond or a lake only that much water that is necessary for his use for drinking etc., so a wise man will take only those portions of the Veda which are useful for salvation.

इत्थं संघटित: पदैस्त्रिभिरसावेकद्विपञ्चाक्षरै:
अर्थैस्तत्वहितप्रयोजनमयैरध्यात्मसारैस्त्रिभि: ।
आद्यस्त्र्यक्षरवेदसूतिरवहत् स्थूलादिवृत्तित्रय:
त्रैगुण्यप्रशमं प्रयच्छति सतां त्रय्यन्त सारोमनु:

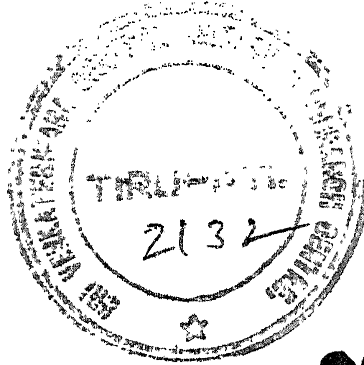
Sri Vedanta Desika in the Rahasyatrayasara lays stress on a Ashtakshara Manthra and considers that this is the core of the Manthras because it has got three vital qualifications, that is, it has got philosophy in 'OM,' peace invocation in 'Namaha' and final beatitude in 'Narayana.' This, philosophy, invocation and usefulness are the three of the fundamentals of religion and

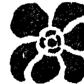
Shri Vedanta Desika takes his stand on these fundamentals in the Rahasyatrayasara.

The derivation of Narayana is given in Narayana Upanishad. In the Maha Narayana Upanishad and also in the Adharva Narayana Upanishad, it is elaborately given how it first begins with 'OM,' second is Namaha and third is Narayana which consists of five letters. OM is one letter, Namaha consists of two letters and Narayana consists of five sanskrit letters. Thus it makes a total of eight letters which is Ashtakshara. It is considered by Vaishnavites the greatest manthra and there are many interpretations of this Manthra. Even for taking this manthra from the Guru, it requires a lot of preparation and observances. The effect of reciting this manthra is described in the Adharva version of the Narayana Upanishad. In his Rahasyatrayasara, Shri Vedanta Desika wants to emphasise on the sacredness of the manthra and points out this manthra has got philosophy, benediction and usefulness which is the most important. The point here is that Adharva Narayana Upanishad just describes what is Ashtakshara and the effect it will produce. Sri Vedanta Desika goes a step further and his interpretation of this manthra is more terse and as he holds that this is the core of all the manthras and every manthra, rituals observances and prayers converge on this Ashtakshara.

As for his visualising a life in Bhadarikashrama and a perfectly virtuous life as in the Kritayuga it looks as if he would like his disciples to go into a life of trance as in walking through tents of gold, bowers of crimson garlanded with flowers and vines and sun beams surrounded with incense and music as if a God dwelt near him in a hollow tree. Every light in the sky, every shadow would minister to his pleasure. He would feel the blood of thousands in his body and his heart would seem to pump through his veins the sap of all his human relations and becomes one with carbon, lime and granite. He will seem to be away from the human world and enter into another existence of life of air, earth and ether. He will be in a trance of Yogis and Sufis and in Samadhi in which the mind works without desire only surrendering itself to the Supreme Being objectless, bodiless and super-conscious. In this state of elation and joy shared by the mystics of Badri-

the vision of Kritha Yuga life will become more real than reality. At this stage one is reminded of Dhruva, one who withdrew his mind from all objects and free from all desires and fixed on the Lord being enthroned in his heart perceived nothing seed. Then he saw the Lord Vishnu who had come on the back of Garuda to Madhuvana with a longing to see his devotee. Evidently it is such a situation Sri Vedanta Desika visualises by insisting on rigid formalities, rituals and prayers (which will lead to the right bliss).





T. T. D. PRESS, TIRUPATI—C. 1,000—17-6-76.